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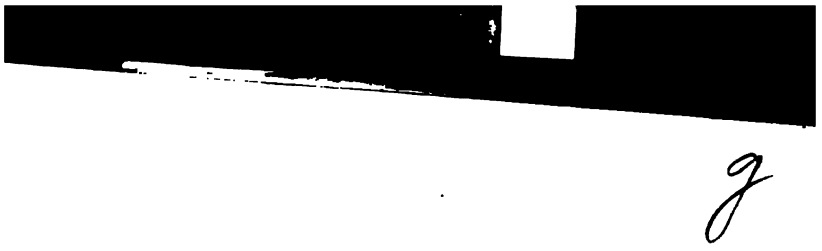
WHEN TRAGEDY GRINS

GRACE MILLER WHITE

Mary S Scollay



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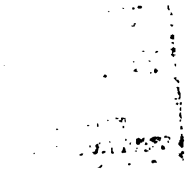

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When Tragedy Grins

BY

GRACE (MILLER) WHITE

AUTHOR OF

TESS OF THE STORM COUNTRY

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

R. F. SCHABELITZ

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LOVINGLY I DEDICATE THIS BOOK

TO THE FIVE OF THEM—

NANINE, MARIE, ANTOINETTE, DAVID AND BOB

Deliver me, Almighty God, into the hands of mine enemies, rather than unto the man I love!

WHEN TRAGEDY GRINS

CHAPTER I

I WAS beginning to feel lonely in this big Hotel Ritz when Countess Larodi came to call upon me in response to Colonel Coster's letter. She's not so good looking as I had been given to believe; but she patted my hand kindly, saying she hoped she would see me often now that I had to come to live in Paris.

"I shall always feel a special interest in any friend of Colonel Coster's," said she, measuring me from my new blouse to my slippers. "You will find that you need many more dresses in Paris than in your own town," she remarked later when she brought up the subject of shopping.

Indeed, when I think about it, she talked of little else save dresses and dressmakers, except when she told me of her son, whom she was very anxious I should meet.

I am obliged to smile when I think of how Aunty used to say, "Never talk of your toilette to strangers, my dear: it's such bad taste."

She always thought I was inclined to be vain; but the Countess apparently doesn't think me vain enough. She is going to bring her son here next Monday, and on that evening I am going to dine with them.

. . . . . .

I'm longing to begin my singing lessons. My piano came today, and I have been practising scales all the morning. I suppose Marquise will tell me that my breathing is

wrong, and that I must unlearn all that I have learned. She makes every new pupil do that, they say.

I want to be really famous,— to become a great prima donna like Melba or Patti. I should be miserable if I had to live the ordinary and uninteresting life of a girl with money.

. . . . . .

If it were not for Eliza, I should be feeling rather lost — she is more like a friend than a maid. It is the first time she has been away from America, and she didn't relish coming to Paris. It annoys her to hear people talking French. She takes it as a kind of intentional rudeness, and makes moody comparisons between American and French manners. Although she is quite forty, she has never married, and says the reason is that she despises men.

There is a lady's maid at the table at which Eliza takes her meals, whose mistress has had three husbands, and is going to take a fourth. Eliza said she ought to know better, and that the woman who married even a second time was tempting Providence. When I asked her why, she told me that one day I would find out for myself. I often wonder if Eliza was ever crossed in love. There must be some reason why she hates men. I don't know very much about men; but there is one man who is, I am sure, nearly perfect — at least he seems so to me.

. . . . . .

It's ridiculous to be bored in Paris, the gayest city in the world. I'm here to study and see things, and I don't intend to sit in this hotel, day after day, looking out of the window, and imagining what might be going on beyond that curve at the Place Vendome.

Just for something to do I am going to take a list of cafés, shut my eyes, and stick a pin at random into one of the names. I'll go this evening to the café that the

point indicates, even if I have to go alone; for I believe Eliza will object.

There! the point of the pin fell directly upon "Le Rat Mort." I rang the bell and asked the chambermaid what it meant. With an impertinent stare she answered:

"The Dead Rat, Mademoiselle."

Whew! The name isn't very savory; but the pin has decided it, and I'm going. I shall take Eliza, too, although she does object, as I prophesied.

. . . . . .

Eliza will hardly speak to me this morning, she is so offended about last night. I have been obliged to put my arms about her and promise that I will never take her out to a café again; for I didn't really mean to hurt her feelings — I wouldn't do that for the whole world. Perhaps it was rather a silly thing to do; for it might have been one of those dangerous places where Nihilists assemble. There are cafés like that in Paris.

We left the hotel about nine last night, Eliza sitting up as straight as a post in the cab.

The Dead Rat is the prettiest café I have ever seen, and far more brilliant than either the Waldorf in New York or the Ritz where I am staying. There are three stories. The furniture on the first floor is upholstered in plush, like our family pew in the church at home. Other people were entering as we arrived. We followed them up the long flight of stairs, and turning to the right sat down upon one of the red seats running along the wall, with a table in front of it.

"We shall have to do the same as other people, Eliza," I whispered, when the waiter told us that they served nothing but champagne. I ordered a bottle, and looked about. I never felt so grown up before.

Ever so many people sat at a long table, and among them one girl especially attracted my attention. I could

scarcely take my eyes from her. She wore no hat, and her dress glittered with spangles. I thought it the prettiest dress in the room; and I shouldn't mind having one like it, only I should have it made longer. She drank three glasses of champagne one after the other. When ours was brought, I poured two glasses, and tasted mine, although Eliza was looking sourly at me from the tail of her eye.

"Drink yours, Eliza," I coaxed. "It's very sweet."

"I should expect to be roasted by the devil if I did, Miss Phyllis — and now that you have seen this place will you come back to the hotel?"

"Not until I have seen more, Eliza. Don't tease — there's a dear!"

After that we were silent, and I noticed that Eliza had set her jaw hard. She glared fiercely at the other occupants of the room, and shuddered as her respectable eyes took in the toilettes of the women. She pushed her glass farther away, simply refusing to lift it to her lips.

Presently the girl with the spangled dress asked a dark man to dance with her. They walked to the end of the room, and went through some curious dances which placed the body in what I considered awkward postures, although I suppose it was one of the peculiar ideas the French have of a dance.

Among the people I noticed some men so small in stature that they looked like boys. They wore knee breeches, and one dressed in green reminded me of a fat caterpillar. Eliza said he looked like a heathenish doll. His lips were reddened into a clearly defined cupid's bow, and his cheeks were highly rouged. His eyelashes had little black knobs attached to the ends of them which I supposed were intended to cast a shadow upon his cheek. He danced once with the girl in the spangled dress and twice with a man in a red costume. After that he came up to our table.

"Do you want all your wine, Mademoiselle?" he asked in fairly good English, and I replied:

"No, we've finished. Please help yourself."

He thanked me, and drank Eliza's champagne. The girl in the spangled dress came up too and, putting her arm round his shoulder, reached over and took all that was left in the bottle. How much this shocked Eliza was plainly written upon her mortified face. She gathered her skirts tightly about her, and shrank back against the wall as if afraid the swishing orange-colored dress would bite her; but I think she was relieved to see the wine go.

Presently she rose to her feet and said firmly, "For a girl only seventeen you're very forward, Miss Phyllis. If you don't come home now, I shall go back to America tomorrow."

I was obliged to follow her out, and in the cab she cried. Then I really was repentant, and felt that in dragging her out against her will I had done wrong. So I comforted her by promising that I would never do it again.

. . . . . .

What a round of excitement I've had for two weeks! Oh, why did I tease Colonel Coster into allowing me to come to Paris? But I was so full of hope, of belief in myself. I wanted to learn to sing so that everybody, and one man in particular, would listen lost in admiration. I do want to make Roger Everard proud of me some day; but tonight I want to be back in America. I believe that if the dear, good old Colonel came into the room this minute I'd kiss his bald head. But I have nobody to blame but myself. I think my headstrong ways come from a certain bad kink in my nature.

Aunty once said, "Phyllis, you ought to try and be more reserved, less impulsive, more like other New England girls."

"I can't," I replied. "I'm like my father, and he was

Irish. Haven't I his curly black hair, his blue eyes, and his strong white teeth?"

Aunty sighed, and ever afterward placed to my Irish blood every rash thing I did.

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I fancy the reason that I'm so lonely is that Eliza has gone back to America. Poor Eliza! She disliked to leave me; but when one has a dying sister duty makes it imperative to go to her. Eliza wouldn't have gone for any other reason. I shall soon find someone else, perhaps a French maid. Countess Larodi told me not to be in a hurry: she'd help me find a suitable companion. But I want to go home, even without carrying out my ambitions.

. . . . . .

The reason I stopped writing was that the maid announced Madame the Countess Larodi. I felt quite ashamed to go to her with red eyes; but she didn't seem to notice them. Her son was with her. I don't like French Counts nor the impertinent way in which they kiss your hand. Fancy an American kissing one's hand!

I suppose I should never have known any French Counts if it hadn't been for Aunty's and Uncle's money and the prestige I possess just because Colonel Coster is my guardian. I am sure that is why the Count and his mother called at the hotel this afternoon. I never knew before that I really amounted to so much, although I have a secret notion it is my money that made them anxious for my friendship; for, after all, I am only a girl, and I don't understand enough French to converse with them. But, never mind, I'm glad I've got the money, and some day, when I'm older and can sing, I'll go out and conquer the world.

Countess Larodi says it isn't just the thing for a girl to live alone in a hotel, especially if she is going to stay in Paris a long time. So I suppose I shall have to give

up this little suite of rooms. I like Paris better than I did; but I still feel a little like a homing pigeon that has forgotten its way. Uncle used to keep pigeons in the dear old days. Once one flew out and never came back. I've always wondered what became of it. Poor thing, I know now how it felt when it was longing for home.

. . . . . .

Paris, beautiful romantic Paris, toward which my eyes have turned since childhood! Paris, the city of art and beauty, where I shall make my voice lovely enough to please all men and women, and to please Roger Everard; for really it is just to please him that I desire to reach the heights of my ambition!

Aunty used to say, "Child, profit by the experience of others, and don't fall in love with any man. It's the ruination of a woman's life and hopes. Remember the terrors of your Aunt Ruth's life, and your own mother's troubles with your handsome Irish father."

Then I would look slyly at her and answer with a question, "How about you and Uncle, Aunty?" For they were two of the happiest dears on earth.

And Aunty would say, "You will never get a man as good as your uncle as long as you live."

. . . . . .

I am beside myself with happiness; for I have seen Marquise, the greatest singing mistress in the world, and she says my voice is wonderfully sweet. But she looked over her glasses at me and said:

"Child, you'll have to suffer to sing!"

What did she mean? I wonder. It makes me shiver when I think of suffering. I can't even bear to cut my finger or to knock my elbow against anything. Pain makes me faint and ill. I wonder what I must endure before I shall be able to sing? Still, suffering would be a

little thing if I could obtain fame and success and so win *his* approbation. How strange that a girl can feel toward a man as I do toward Roger Everard when she has seen him only a few times! I think it is because he is good and so different from other men. When Aunty saw him, she said:

"For so young a man he's quite wonderful,— such a carriage and such an earnest face! I do like to see a young man religious, too."

It would be queer if I should marry an artist, and a religious one at that; for I haven't got the serious, godly sense. In fact, I don't know what I do believe. I know one thing, that I love the whole world,— everybody and everything; men, women, and children, especially babies; cats and dogs and cows; toads and snakes — well, just everything that has life. That's my religion, I believe! I suppose that if I should dig deep down in my heart, I'd find a belief of some sort; but to me churches and the like are always associated with old age and death. And I want to live and love and be loved always, always! I wonder what Roger is doing now?

. . . . . .

I have been so busy that I have not written for ten days. I believe that Casperone Larodi is going to ask me to marry him. His mother is an American, and was married when very young to a French Count who squandered her fortune. She came from a Quaker family in Philadelphia; but she has lost every tendency to Quakerism she ever had, for now she uses decidedly red rouge and wears a wig, and when she grows vivacious the little pink feather that decorates her false hair bobs fitfully to and fro. I have noticed that all Frenchwomen, when somewhat old, frou-frou themselves to look younger. I suppose it is excusable; for it must be dreadful to be thirty and have to be continually thinking of wrinkles. Yet I ought to be ashamed

to write this; for it was kind of her to take me to the opera last night.

I don't believe that I shall ever marry, unless Roger Everard asks me — somehow I feel certain that I could love him devotedly, just as my poor dead mother loved my father, and as Aunty loved Uncle. How many times I have heard Aunty's low voice coming out of the darkness on winter nights, during that last sad illness of Uncle's, hushing his moans with the same little song! Her teeth chattered with the cold; but the song never ceased. She couldn't have lived through those sleepless nights if she hadn't loved him — the thought of them brings tears to my eyes. Aunty must have loved Uncle,— she must have! — and I am sure that he loved her, though he used to call her "a good old soul."

. . . . . .

The Countess looked sharply at me when I told her I was going to motor in the Bois with a friend of her son's.

"I will speak English very slowly, so he will be able to understand me," I said in explanation. "You know in America girls can always ride with men friends."

"American girls are too rapid," she said severely. "Before they are out of their teens they read all sorts of books, learn more than they should, and go about too often unchaperoned. We in this country give those liberties to married women,— if you want a good French husband you must live in accordance with French customs. Profit by my experiences, my dear."

I didn't tell her that I didn't care a fig for French customs; that if I married it would be to an American.

I mean to ride with Count Larodi's friend in the Bois; for he said he had something important to ask me, and I am curious to find out what it is. I haven't told anyone; but I don't care for the Countess nor any of her friends. They seem to have no aim in life. I wish I

could meet the real people of Paris. The Countess makes me so uncomfortable by her patronizing ways! Her son says he thinks girls ought to be allowed to go about here the same as they do in America. He told me that if his mother didn't discover it we should make many little trips together in the Bois.

. . . . . .

I didn't write any more yesterday, because I went motoring with the Count de Grimaud in a car that he said he had only recently purchased. It was such a funny experience! The automobile was a lovely red one. It had a little iron flag sticking straight up in the air with the one word "Libre" on it. When we started, the chauffeur pushed it down, and up came some figures. I have an idea it was an arrangement that indicated the number of miles we drove.

When the Count asked me in faltering English if I didn't think this was the most beautiful drive I had ever taken, my mind buried itself in memories of New England, with its valleys and hills, its magnificent old elms and sleepy rivers. Oh, yes! there are other places quite as beautiful as the Paris Bois.

My companion showed by his manner that he was pleased with my appearance. I knew I looked well in my fresh muslin dress and my hat covered with flowers the color of my frock. My shoes, too, were of the same shade. De Grimaud's eyes were half-closed, and after awhile he reached over and took my hand. I suddenly realized what he was doing and drew my fingers away. He pretended to be dreadfully hurt.

We sped out into the country, the trees flying by as if they were on wings, and the figures on the little machine in front of us constantly changing like lightning flashes. No automobile ever made so many miles in so short a time. I can understand why the French people plume themselves

about their Bois; for one leaves the city and in a few minutes is surrounded by nothing but trees and natural scenery.

Suddenly Monsieur de Grimaud said in a sympathetic voice, "Mademoiselle is without relations, is she not?"

I felt a quick pain as I thought of Aunty, and answered, "Yes, I am practically alone now."

"But you are rich — you will never want friends." He looked at me as if half anticipating a denial.

"Yes, I am rich, I suppose. My aunt left me all of her money when she died. Darling old Aunty!"

He sighed and gradually got nearer to me. I edged back into the corner.

"America is a very rich country — I know it, I know it!" said Monsieur de Grimaud with another laugh. He took my hand again and almost whispered, "I love the Americans — ah, I love you!" Then he went on incoherently, snatching my fingers. "I like American women much. Like French women, no; Italian women, no; but American women — *Mon Dieu! Mon Dieu!* I love them, I love them!"

I made an effort to disengage my hand. He said that my face attracted him. This made my cheeks burn hotly.

"You will love me, won't you?" he exclaimed. His fingers wandered slowly, almost dissectingly, over my arms. "I love you! I want you! Oh, Frenchmen know how to love! Yes, beautiful American woman, we know how! Your countrymen live but to make money. They do not love."

I didn't wish him to touch me, so I tried to slip my arm from his long white fingers; but he, thinking I liked it, still persisted as he said:

"We love you, we Frenchmen. You have much charm, much — much —" But before he could say another word, I finished sweetly, "Much money."

"*Oui, oui* — oh, much money!"

"Please do not put your hands on me again," I said, "and allow me a little more room." I sat up straight.

Now I understand why it is that young women in France are not allowed to go out alone with their countrymen. The men are much too familiar, and crush one's dresses.

After imploring in vain for one little kiss, he asked me if I would go motoring with him tomorrow, and I said quietly and in very plain English:

"Not for anything in all the world. Nothing could ever tempt me to go out with you again. I want to go home."

"*Bon, bon, bon!*" he shouted, and gave an order to the chauffeur to go back. He evidently mistook what I said for an assurance that I would go again with him; for I know that "*Bon, bon, bon!*" means "Good, good, good!" I was not very cordial, nor did I care for the signs of love in his rolling eyes.

At the hotel I left him with a curt nod.

. . . . . .

I'm sorry now that I never learned French. Of course, I know a few expressions. I've picked them up here and there. Mr. Greenaway, my tutor, had never studied the language himself, and there was no one else in our village with any pretentions to schooling. Aunty thought Mr. Greenaway, who could read Hebrew as easily as most men read English, could give me a better education than any modern governess. And in a way she was right; for he gave me a knowledge of the old classics that few girls who have been to a fashionable boarding school possess. But, unfortunately for me, French did not come into the dear old man's curriculum, and I am here in a French city without being able to speak intelligibly in any other language than my own.

. . . . . .

Two weeks ago I made a resolution to write a little every day, for I want to be able to call back my happenings in Paris; but, since my account of the Bois, I haven't had time to write a word.

Count Larodi has asked me to marry him six different times. He's rather nice — I almost believe that he likes me a little. He has shown me a great deal of Paris,— the different hotels and theaters, and once we went to Chantilly,— but he has never allowed me to sit outside in the little chairs in front of the teahouses and cafés to watch the people as they go by. It would be such a novel thing if I could; but Count Larodi is deaf to my appeals. He says it's not the thing for a young girl to be seen outside, sipping tea.

I hear French on all sides of me; but I don't understand it. However, in a few days I am to begin to study it, and I shall use every word I learn every day. That's the only way, they say, to learn a language.

Count Larodi's mother said that her eldest son married a very rich American girl. They showed me her photo, and the Countess seemed to be proud of her beauty and wealth. It must be dreadful to love a man and have him marry you for the dot you bring him.

CHAPTER II

IT'S almost six weeks since I've looked into this book — and Uncle's money is lost and Colonel Coster is dead. I never realized that a girl could be so miserable because of money.

This morning I went to the bank to present my letter of credit, and the cashier fingered it thoughtfully for a moment.

"Mademoiselle, I'm sorry," he said, "but we can't honor this paper. We've received news from America that the bank of which Colonel Coster was president has closed its doors. He has committed suicide."

I stood powerless to utter a word.

"He made unwise speculations," went on the bank man. "It was unfortunate —"

"I don't understand," I gasped. "Colonel Coster was my uncle's most trusted adviser. But — but —" my eyes filled with tears. "Tell me — oh, tell me, please, about his death!"

"That he committed suicide, Mademoiselle, is all I know. Your letter of credit is useless."

He shoved it through the window opening, and I went out.

I walked along Rue de la Paix, and mechanically stopped before a window and looked in at the blazing diamonds. A man peered out upon me, and I turned abruptly away as he looked at my reddened eyes. I've never studied the financial question of a country, and I don't understand how a bank could lose money; that is, such a lot as I had.

The whole of Paris had changed in a few moments. Place Vendome seemed to shrink into a circle too small for upright people to walk through. The buildings looked abominably low-sized, under-made, and mean.

I suppose the porter at the hotel smiled as usual; but in my overwrought brain I imagined he grinned, and I had never noticed before that he was so small and bandy-legged. In my room I stood before the glass for a few moments, to inspect the new girl reflected in it,— a girl without money, without friends. It was only yesterday — nay, even this morning, before going to the bank — that I had been buoyantly happy in beautiful Paris, and now I am wondering how I can get back to America without money.

. . . . . .

"You have lost your fortune, Miss Fitzpatrick?" Countess Larodi looked over my head at the opposite corner as she spoke. She had invited me to the five o'clock.

I nodded, tears choking my utterance.

"America is a stupid place," she continued in a hard tone.

"No, no, not that!" I cried.

"You will return home?"

"I don't know," I answered dully, almost hopelessly.

I had had a hope that the Countess would be kind to me; for I longed for a woman's sympathy.

"The papers said this morning that your money will never be recovered; that you will be entirely without funds."

"Please, please!" I stammered, and hid my head and wept as only a girl in Paris with scarcely a sou is able to weep.

"Will you have tea?" she asked not unkindly.

I took the cup, and choked down the bitter stuff. I've always hated tea. At that moment Casperone came in

gloomily and seated himself. His mother gave him an order with authoritative plainness.

"You dine tonight with Baronesse Salsladie," said she.

"I can't." And he gave a significant glance at me. I knew what it meant, and the blood rushed into my face. In an instant I had learned the lesson of a lifetime.

"If you have an appointment with Mademoiselle Fitzpatrick this evening, she will excuse you," insisted the Countess, and again I nodded my head.

Rising, I quickly took my leave; but not before Casperone had whispered:

"I shall never forgive you if you do not keep your appointment with me this evening. I've many things to talk over with you."

It eased my heart to hear him speak so. I would dine with him in spite of his austere parent!

"Your mother—" I began, and dropped my eyes.

"My mother doesn't rule me," he replied as he placed me in the cab. "Meet me — understand?"

"Yes," I answered. "I meant to meet you all the time."

In my room I took my purse from my pocket, and counted the money over like a miser. Twelve francs in silver, ten in gold, and a fifty-franc note. It would take this and the money realized on my jewels to pay my hotel bill and the debts I had contracted by the advice of the Countess. I shall be absolutely without money. Yesterday this was the price of a bit of lace, of a few trinkets, or a day's trip to Fontainebleau; but today it's every sou I possess in the world. I felt as if I were going to a funeral, the funeral of my own happiness, instead of to a dinner with Casperone. Phyllis Fitzpatrick, the heiress, was dead! I was now Phyllis Fitzpatrick, the penniless orphan!

The gown I selected to wear to the dinner was a black

crêpe de chine. I had been told that it was too old looking for a young girl like myself; but tonight it seemed suitable: I had grown older in a few hours.

Much as I distrusted Count Larodi, I felt a warmth in his sympathy and a satisfaction at his defiance of his mother. But his first words recalled my misgivings.

"Are you sure," he asked, "that your money is gone?"

I bowed my head. He would have stood higher in my estimation had he waited awhile, and I was — oh, so miserable! He noticed my agitation, and refrained from asking more.

When dinner was finished, he twirled his little black mustache and looked at me dubiously.

"Let's go outside somewhere for coffee," he suggested.

"Where?" I asked dully.

"Café de la Paix, or somewhere else."

"I thought," I objected, flushing, "that it was unusual for a young girl to sit outside a café?"

"Oh, it will do," he drawled, and I followed him in silence.

A boy, madly waving his arms, shouting a monologue in French, ran to and fro on Boulevard des Capucines. He had a funny little way of pulling down his cornered hat that made him resemble Napoleon, whom he was admirably imitating.

Casperone, looking thin and dark, so unlike our handsome Americans, silently studied my face as I watched the boy. Suddenly he spoke to me.

"You look charming tonight." His eyes traveled furtively over my black costume. "I can scarcely keep my hands from you," he finished abruptly.

It was the first time he had spoken like this, and I flushed in confusion. Trying not to heed his admiration, I parried vaguely, "There are many charming women passing all the time."

"But they are not like you," he insisted. "There is something about you, Phyllis, that sets my soul on fire."

"Hush!" I commanded. "I want to watch that boy's imitation of Napoleon."

Casperone breathed something that sounded like an oath, and angrily shrugged his shoulders. "I like you very much," he said after a pause.

The boy had disappeared with his hand full of sous.

"So you told me before," I replied simply, and then I went on, "That's such a pretty girl!" I nodded toward a slight figure on the pavement, more for the purpose of changing the subject than for any other reason. "Look! Isn't she pretty?"

"Cocotte!" breathed Casperone.

"Is that her name?" I asked. "Do you know her?"

He smiled. "A little."

"Cocotte? She has a pretty name, too."

"That's not her name: that's what she is."

Casperone's white teeth gleamed through the cigarette smoke. The girl's eyes were roving searchingly over the tables filled with people. The white and pink skin was unwrinkled. The deep, velvety eyes looked inquiringly, almost babyishly, about. Then, not finding whom she sought, she moved on.

"You say, 'That's what she is.' What is she?" I asked. "I have seldom seen a woman so beautiful."

"You haven't been in Paris long," he replied. "A cocotte? Well, a cocotte is a — what do you call it in America? — a cocotte is a cloak model, and she's a famous one." He laughed softly, eying me through narrowed lids.

"Oh," I hesitated, "do cloak models make much money in Paris?"

"I believe they do," replied Casperone, becoming grave. "I believe they do."

"Do they have to speak French?"

He would have noticed the eagerness in my tones if he hadn't been tearing away at the end of a cigarette. "It isn't necessary," he drawled; "but most of them do."

"Is there a shop where they work?"

He laughed again. "Yes."

"Do they all have such beautiful figures?" My eyes were still straining through the glare of the bright electric light after the receding figure of the lovely cloak model.

"Yes."

"And all pretty?"

"*Oui, oui!*"

"Where are the shops where the models work?"

"On every Boulevard in Paris," Casperone snapped. His voice was getting raspy, with a little French snarl in it.

"But," I insisted, "where on the boulevards are the shops, and what are their names?"

My persistence seemed to anger him, and he laughed sarcastically. "Oh, if you're thinking of trying for a place, just ask for a cloak model shop — and — well, a cloak that would fit that figure of yours — ah, *Mon Dieu!*" Casperone's eyes grew soft with midnight blackness; but he embarrassed me by thrusting his face near mine. "I want to talk to you," he breathed. "I love you! I love you!"

"Without any money?" I asked. A sob caught my throat as I forced a laugh that was nearer a groan to my lips.

"Well," he hesitated, "it makes some difference, I must say. Not that I love you less, though. A Frenchman can't marry a woman without a dot. You see, your voice is worth a lot; though to train it you must have money. But the failure of the bank doesn't mean that you and I — ah — can't be friends."

I looked at him curiously, fearfully. Friends! And he had asked me to marry him every day for a week! I hadn't allowed myself to think of the future. Of course, without my monthly allowance, lessons would be out of the question. My voice had never seemed quite so precious, never so much to be desired.

The boy was back again mimicking Napoleon. I wondered how many sous he had earned. His fat little hand bulged with coins.

Casperone was still pulling savagely at his cigarette. "I said we could be friends," he resumed hurriedly. "I like you immensely — more than any girl I know. Phyllis, I simply can't talk to you here! Couldn't we go to my rooms for a quiet little chat?"

"Would you ask a girl to — to your rooms — a girl whom you want to marry?"

I didn't recognize my own voice. It mingled harshly with the even-running French of the boy-Napoleon. The crowd was laughing at his antics, while I was biting my lips in despair.

"I want to go home," I cut in quickly. "Please put me in a cab. I don't want you — to come with me!"

As the cab-horse trotted away, Casperone was delicately twirling the tip of his small French mustache, and I thought I caught a glimpse of regret in his eyes.

So Casperone has gone out of my life — and I don't care! He has made no impression upon my heart. All I want is money — money — money — and money I must have, like other people, whether they are girls or not! Tears came into my eyes as a little dog shot across Place Vendome after a woman in a blue robe. She picked the little fellow up in her arms lovingly. I almost wished I were a little dog.

I am so lonely — so afraid! Oh, to be with Eliza, or someone I know! "Cloak model" keeps ringing in my

ears. Casperone seemed to think that on account of my figure I ought to be able easily to get a place as one. I haven't qualifications enough to be a governess. If everything else fails, I'll try for a cloak model position.

My rooms seem more comfortable than ever. The piano with the book of scales open upon it makes the tears start afresh.

Yesterday — oh, to go back to yesterday, to know again the feeling of security! Soon the piano will be gone, and I sha'n't have money either to study or to go home with. I must find work of some sort! There's an awful feeling in my heart when I think that I have to go out alone in the world to get a living. But now I am going to bed, because I shall have to start early tomorrow morning to seek employment. There must be something for a girl to do in Paris!

CHAPTER III

I'M footsore and weary, having tramped from bureau to bureau in search of employment every day since learning of the loss of my fortune. At the United States consul's office the man in charge said that the consul general was in America on a commission of some sort. They could do nothing for me.

Two Americans committed suicide today! All this tragedy comes from the financial turmoil in our beloved country — America! I wonder what caused it?

The piano man growled fiercely because he had rented the instrument for several months and it had been returned in so short a time.

"Like all you Americans!" he said harshly. "It's bluff, bluff, bluff!"

My misery restrained me from retort: I had no spirit left for contention or resentment of indignities to which I was growing accustomed. I turned away, struggling with suppressed emotions.

Dear God! For a hundred francs! I'm heartsick with failure!

. . . . . .

I came to the Latin Quarter, discovered a renting agency, and asked for cheap rooms.

"I want a suite in a house where cocottes live," I explained.

The man understood, and brought me to these rooms on Boulevard St. Michel. As everything else has failed, I've resolved to try and get a place in one of the French

shops. It may be the "Bon Marche"— French stores have such queer names! I do hope that I shall succeed; for this morning I went without breakfast. I've pawned my last jewels to get rent money. At least I've discovered this: that gems and baubles are not necessary to happiness. Food and a bed are!

In my sleeping-room corner is a dressing table. The mirror, brushes, and knickknacks spread upon it look quite like home. To find this place took me many wearisome days,— days of starvation, days when death seemed preferable to life, and the Seine seemed constantly calling me by name.

But I am happier tonight — I appreciate what it means to be in a little place of my own. When I spoke of getting work to the agent, he told me in faltering English that he knew nothing of the cloak model shops; but said that many cocottes lived in this house. And I believe it is so; for yesterday about four o'clock in the afternoon I heard voices, high pitched and strained, talking in rapid French from door to door. The girls must leave their shops early.

I went out this morning to find someone who could speak English fluently; but to my question everyone shook his head, and I thought noses went up at my efforts to make myself understood. Oh, for someone to help me! I could almost wish for Casperone, if it were not for my pride.

My only comfort, so far, is in venting out my heart upon these poor little blistered pages. It is a relief to write about my troubles.

I remember attending a small church when I was a little girl, where they sang a hymn that I had forgotten until today:

"Lead, Kindly Light, Lead Thou me on."

I wonder if God will lead me, and if there is really such a being, and — and — if He will help me to be a cocotte? For what's the use of a God if He doesn't guide you?

. . . . . .

I am bewildered with troubled thought. I haven't a sou left, and I'm frantic with fear. On the stairs as I was going out this afternoon I met the beautiful cloak model whom I pointed out to Casperone that last night at the Café de la Paix. I smiled pleasantly; for I felt that I had at least one friend in the house. She took me in from head to foot, her soft, velvety eyes filled with anger. My face was red when I reached the street — tears blinded me so that I bumped into another woman coming in. I was unable to express my apology in French.

"Oh, pardon me," I said in my mother tongue.

"It is nozzing," she replied, and I wheeled round.

"You speak English?" I asked eagerly.

"A leetle."

"And you live here?"

She nodded.

"So do I," I went on rapidly, fearing that she would run away before I had a chance to ask her some questions.

"Zat's nice," she said. "You come to my room some day — tomorrow, sure, and I talk English weez you. You cocotte?"

I nodded "Yes," and supplemented it by saying, "A cloak model."

She shook her head slowly, her eyes gathering an expression of noncomprehension.

"You haf sweetheart here?" she demanded.

"No," I replied, astonished.

"You leetle American girl?"

"Yes."

"Poor baby! Come see me tomorrow."

From her purse she took a card emblazoned with a bird

carrying some kind of message, and handed it to me. After wiping away the silly tears, I read:

"*Message de l'amour.*"

I did not know what it meant. I shall ask her when I see her. Her name is "Captain Zadie"—nothing more.

. . . . . .

It was about five o'clock when I got to the boulevard again; and I felt as though I had found friends, for the electric lights and brilliant advertisements gave it the familiarity of New York.

Once or twice Frenchmen spoke to me; but I turned from them scornfully. How dare such creatures accost a decent girl in the street? A commotion at the corner attracted my attention. Two women, one with a bleeding face, were being separated from each other by an officer. I couldn't understand the rapid French that was being shouted backward to the eager crowd. As I turned aside, the woman with the bruised face was trying, with shaking hands, to pin on a battered hat. I remember that when the bleeding woman had gone away with a friend I felt positive that the two had been quarreling over a man. I have never been really in love. It must be a dreadful thing to love a man in that awful, maddening way.

A policeman spoke to me roughly.

"I'm an American girl—I don't understand you!" I said slowly.

He touched his hat and turned away. A strange, sweet feeling crept over me. He seemed, at least, to respect my country.

Not one of the shops on the boulevard looked like those I've seen on Broadway; for in these gaily lighted windows there was not a single cloak. Suddenly I noticed a Frenchman with a pointed beard coming toward me. I would ask him my all-important question. Perhaps this

man could tell me where I'd be able to locate the shops. I stopped him by a gesture of my hand. He looked down upon me; for he was taller than his countrymen.

"Where are the shops that cocottes work in?" I asked aloud. My voice didn't seem natural.

I repeated my question, enunciating the syllables carefully. Even if he didn't understand the English, he would gather something of my desire. Instead of answering, he took his hand from his pocket and pushed a large silver five-franc piece into my fingers. He was gone in an instant.

For a moment the blood leaped to my face like a surging tide — I did not believe my eyes. He couldn't have understood me. No doubt he thought I was begging. I turned to run after him; but he was lost in the crowd.

Five francs, and my purse empty! In bewilderment I hurried past the cafés down the boulevard with the strong, dark face of the foreigner as vivid as a picture before me. Of course, he had not understood, or he wouldn't have so insulted me; for it *was* an insult for a man to throw money at a woman as one would throw a bone to a hungry dog. But he was gone — and tightly pressed between my fingers was the five-franc piece.

I resolved to try again — someone else might understand. If I could but meet an American, or even an Englishman, he would, perhaps, be able to tell me where I should inquire for the work that would bring enough money to take me back to America.

Near the end of the boulevard a lonely man came toward me. He was not walking with the quick jerks of the Frenchman. There was something English about his appearance that raised hope in my breast. I stopped directly in front of him, and repeated the question I had put to the first man. This time my voice sounded more like my own. The man came to an abrupt standstill.

I said it over again a little timidly. He was not an Englishman, after all. He ran his glance over me.

"Cocotte?" he said. He had understood at last!

"Yes, yes!" I replied. "Cocotte, cocotte — cloak model. Tell me where the place is, please."

"*Oui, oui, oui!* Come weez me. Thees way."

Even to hear a word of English gave me courage, and I turned and walked at his side.

He put his hand caressingly upon my arm.

"Don't touch me, please," I said nervously. "Please don't!"

My drawing away seemed to puzzle him: he bent forward and looked into my face. "D'Angleterre?" asked he.

I knew what that meant, because I always wrote "England" that way on my letters to some people in London.

I shook my head. "No," I said, "American. You are taking me to the shop where I can get work?"

"*Oui, oui!* Thees way, thees way!"

Following him, I kept to the edge of the pavement. I could not use the five francs so questionably received: it was not mine. Even to see the shops where I could present myself early the next morning would be some satisfaction. If they were only open, and the manager should engage me, then I could borrow money from the woman in the back room on the strength of it, and go out for something to eat.

My guide made me uncomfortable by his furtive eyes, and if I turned to meet his gaze he would either drop it or raise it, humming some air. We turned into a narrow dark street that ran up the short hill from the boulevard. I could see no stores; only illy-lit halls and narrow, winding stairways.

We paused before an open door, and again the white,

effeminate hand, with finely polished nails, pressed my arm.

"Is it here?" I asked doubtfully.

"*Oui, oui!*" whispered the Frenchman. "Here ees *cadeau* for you — money — good *cadeau*. Ah! You are ravishing!"

"I don't want money," I cried indignantly. "I want employment."

He lifted his hands deprecatingly. "Come up," he coaxed. "Mademoiselle ees cold."

I was shaking to the bone.

"Warm supper," added he, and I could see the dark eyes close as he leaned forward.

Supper! — the mere word sent a faintness through my limbs. Hunger suddenly clamored within me. I became dizzy, and put out my hand to steady myself. He must have thought that I was giving him my fingers; for he took them in his soft, warm palm, and led me through a small stone alleyway, where we passed a man who nodded comprehendingly. At the first bend of the stairs I stopped, sobs shaking me until I felt that if I did not cry I should die on the spot.

"Mademoiselle ees hungry; Mademoiselle ees cold. Come, come, my belle, my *petite chérie!*"

Still holding my hand, he took a key from his pocket and placed it in the lock. Supper! Supper! A ticking sound from the corner of the hallway mingled with the grating of the key. I turned my eyes, and saw the upper part of a small, dark insect lifting itself from an aperture in the wall. It scuttled into the light for an instant, seemed to scan me with a thousand eyes, and tailed back into the hole again. It woke me thoroughly from the hideous nightmare into which I had fallen. A sickening suspicion rushed into my mind. This was no shop!

"I'm going home!" I cried, and darted down the stairs.

The man in the alleyway stared after me. I heard following footsteps; but did not wait to see if I were pursued. My flesh tingled as I fled into Boulevard St. Michel; and here and there, as I rushed along, I passed a lonely woman or a crowd of students. I went on and on toward the river. At last the lights, which strung themselves miles up and down the Seine, came across my view. I dropped upon a bench and listened to the water as it stole under the huge bridge and took its almost silent way through the lighted city. As I heard the river rolling onward and ever onward, poor Colonel Coster came into my mind. He had been such a good friend ever since I could remember, and as yet I did not know how he had lost my money. I was so truly grateful for his sympathy since Aunty's death that I could hold no bitterness in my heart against him. I wondered, as I searched the sky longingly, whether in that far-away spirit land he had met Uncle and Aunty, and if they knew of the shadow of tragedy that hung over me.

But the five-franc piece seemed a barrier between me and the river. The dark face of the Frenchman came constantly before me. He had thought I was begging, and had given me the money out of the kindness of his heart. I felt that I could forever place that one good deed against all the bad in a country seemingly without conscience. The silver spoke of the cloak models; while the river sang its endless tune of liberty and freedom from insults.

The five-franc piece has given me more courage than anything else could have, unless it might have been to meet Roger Everard.

On my way home I passed the pretty cloak model. I didn't smile again. I couldn't forget the affront she had given me earlier in the day.

It is almost two o'clock. I hear a rap upon the door.

CHAPTER IV

SINCE I wrote last, I have heard such things — such terrible things! My head is whirling, and I'm miserable. But Captain Zadie says that this will pass, and she ought to know. It was her rap I heard on the door. She invited me to take coffee in her cozy little rooms, which are curtained and daintily arranged.

"You come een," said she slowly, "and seet there until I have made the drink."

Captain Zadie is fat, good natured, and divinely motherly. Immediately I began to love her. Like a kitten, I curled up in an old-fashioned armchair, and a feeling of contentment crept over me; for I thought that now someone would tell me where I could find work. Perhaps Captain Zadie would take me with her.

The gas-stove shot out little flames of red and green, and once the colors mingled into a dark blue. The warmth made me drowsy. The coffee was hot and fragrant. I took three lumps of sugar. Aunty used to say it was bad for my teeth to gobble sweets like a greedy child.

"Where should girls apply for positions as cloak models?" I asked, sipping the brown beverage with enjoyment.

Again as in the morning Captain Zadie slowly shook her head. "I know not what cloak models means."

"Then cocottes," I explained. "It's the same thing."

"Ah, yes, cocottes. You a cocotte, eh?"

"Not yet: I want to be very much, Captain Zadie," I explained. "You see, I lost my income lately, and I must do something. I haven't any money left."

Captain Zadie stared hard into my face. For fully one minute we looked directly into each other's eyes; then she dropped hers, and went on stirring her coffee as if she were thinking deeply, and I were no longer in the vision of her mind.

I wondered if she didn't want to tell me — if she were one of those women who wouldn't help another to get work.

Suddenly I caught a strange expression in her face, an expression that blanched my cheeks. My common-sense was forcing upon me a fact I did not understand.

"Tell me," I cried, frightened, "what is a cocotte?"

Captain Zadie got up deliberately, slowly filled my cup with coffee, and then served herself. With as much deliberation she sat down again; but not one word did she utter. I waited.

"Haf you always been a gude girl?" she asked presently in a low voice.

I hastily reviewed my past life, not forgetting my temper, Aunty's trouble with me since the death of my father, and all manner of schoolday escapades. The remembrance of Aunt Sarah's deathbed came into my mind, and her last words drifted into my heart. "You have always been such a sweet, good girl, Phyllis," said she; but my conscience told me that I had not always — always been good. Then I answered Captain Zadie:

"No, not always; but I'm sorry now. I thought only last night that maybe I was being punished for my wickedness to my aunt. She was so unselfish with her loved ones that she spoiled me. She brought me up, you see, and left me her money. I came over here alone to train my voice. I have no relatives left in America."

"I mean other kind of gude," demanded Captain Zadie relentlessly. "I mean — haf you effer lufed a man?"

I vividly remember how I felt when Roger Everard

touched my hand or looked into my eyes, and I answered hesitatingly, "I know an ideal man. He is an American, and good and noble."

"Cocotte, cocotte!" murmured Captain Zadie. She filled my cup with coffee, this time forgetting hers. "I think your American people could haf given you some-t'ing to do," said she after a pause. "Eferybody haf to care for hees own people, and Mademoiselle ees such a baby."

"Oh, I did try before I came to this house, and I have tried since I came, too; but all the Americans here are as badly off as I. There seems to be nothing in the city for me. In the typist office they smiled when I asked for work, and I couldn't even get a position to take care of babies. I do not speak French, you see. I interviewed ever so many ladies."

"*Pauvre mignonne!*" she murmured. Her eyes darkened during her musing; but she lifted her shoulders and asked curtly, "Haf you no money here?"

I shook my head forlornly.

"You must haf friends — where ees they?"

I repeated the story of my guardian's death, of how I had been left to shift for myself.

Several times Captain Zadie stopped me, imploring that I speak more slowly. After I had finished, she raised one great shoulder, lit a cigarette, settled back in the large chair, and fell to thinking. We were silent for a long time. The little white dog on the fur mat in the corner lifted its body, whined, turned about, and again sank to sleep.

"I have no friends now in America to whom I can apply for money," I put in finally; "so I want to work like you do, and like the tall pretty girl I saw coming in who wouldn't smile at me."

"Ah, Lady Jane Grey," interposed Zadie. "*Oui*, she is a cocotte, like you haf said."

Zadie showed her white teeth in a smile. I noticed there was rouge still left on her lips. I suppose the hot coffee had washed if off in patches. Before I could question her she spoke again.

"You not be like Lady Jane and me," she exclaimed. "I say no, no!"

"But I must work," I said miserably. "And I'd rather stay here with you. I don't know anyone else in Paris who would trouble with me. Mayn't I go with you to work?"

She narrowed her eyes and looked at me, then reached out and took up her little dog. "If you stay here, you beg money, see? You stay weez me no other way."

"Beg money!" I gasped. "Beg money!"

"*Oui, oui!* If you can't work, then you beg. *Voilà!*"

I shook my head. "But a cloak model — isn't a cocotte the same as a cloak model, one who tries on cloaks at stores?"

At my explanation her mystified expression cleared. "*Non, non!* Cocottes — cocottes ees human leafs on life's river. *Pauvres petites! Pauvres petites!*"

In infinite pity, her voice sank to a whisper, and she said no more. Nor did I ask her — just then. Suddenly I realized what she meant. The spot where the five-franc piece had been in my hand burned as if an iron straight from the forge were branding my flesh. Casperone Larodi had lied to me!

Presently Captain Zadie raised her head. "You vish to stay weez me here, in thees house?"

"I haven't any other friends," I sobbed.

"Then if you stay," she said almost fiercely, "you be gude, or I think I keel you!"

After awhile she asked, "You efer hear *Donnez moi un cadeau?*"

"No."

"Then you say that to boulevard men till you get money to go to your country. *Donnez moi un cadeau,*" she whispered drearily again, and yet again there fell from her lips, "*Donnez moi un cadeau.*"

She dropped the dog and got up, and I burst out:

"What does *Donnez moi un cadeau* mean?"

"*Donnez moi un cadeau* in your tongue, leetle American fool, eet means, 'Will you gif me a leetle gift?'"

She was standing with her hands on her hips, looking at me gravely as if she would read my very thoughts. I looked into her soulful, faded eyes and whispered:

"Do you — do you say just, *Donnez moi un cadeau* in your work?"

For a few minutes she didn't reply. Shaking herself, she turned away, dropping her head. "I not lie to you," she murmured. "I not say eet. I ees old, ugly, and bad."

I sprang to her side, wringing the hand she thrust out to ward me off. "You're not bad. Neither are you old or ugly," I exclaimed. "You are not! You're the best woman in the world, I'm sure. Don't, don't push me away!"

For one short minute she gathered me close. I imagine I felt as I should if my own mother had hugged me. Bless big Captain Zadie, dear Heaven, with all thy strength! Bless her!

After a short silence I asked Zadie about the pretty girl Casperone knew.

"Lady Jane lufs an American," she explained. "Her name is Jeanne; but he called her Lady Jane firs'. He say she look like some great lady in England who had her head — *comme ça* — cut off, I mean." She made a motion with her fingers about her neck.

"He come here often. He has lot money and ees good

Christian. He has try to make Jeanne be gude, too. He pray for she, Jeanne say."

Through my mind comes the passionate wish that some good man would be interested in me; for I'm lonely, and my hopes of earning money have been dashed from me by the wicked misleading of Larodi and the plain words of Captain Zadie.

"Jeanne want to marry her American," Zadie said more slowly.

"Then why doesn't she do what he wants her to? Have you seen him?"

"*Oui!* He is good looking for American. Nearly always they ees not that way. Most of them ees inseepid, you see, weez pale faces an' light eyes."

I looked my amazement. Was it possible that Captain Zadie could admire Frenchmen more than our splendid Americans? Lady Jane's friend is a good man, then. How I should like to see him! Paris is such a lonely place! I want to go home! I want to go back to America!

. . . . . .

Of course, I can't beg! I feel quite ashamed because I've been eating with Captain Zadie; but have promised to pay everything back to her very soon.

Every day I've been out searching for something to do; but the city is filled with Americans situated like me. No one seems to have money, and the French people haven't any pity for poor foreigners.

Yesterday morning I made up my mind to ask Zadie just what to do. In the afternoon she sat beside me, and, like the good soul that she is, told me about Paris and of the class of miserable women who, like myself, are without money and without friends.

"You be not what we ees, leetle fool!" she thrust in,

after a pause. "You go home to your country, back to your States, see?"

Of course I cried — cried just as any girl would. I was ashamed — ashamed and so awfully afraid.

Captain Zadie told me of things that I do not feel like writing at present, about every-day life upon Boulevard St. Michel,— sickening things, which set my head aching, and my heart beating. I can't believe it, I can't! It is all so horrible!

I'm beginning to understand life now — the five francs is on the table before me. I feel the tingle of it on my fingers. Daylight is peeping over the roofs of the buildings on St. Michel, and the vegetable carts are rattling over the cobbles. Lady Jane has just come in and gone to bed — her room is next to mine.

Donnez moi un cadeau — the phrase mingles with the clatter of the carts and the twitter of the birds in the eaves of yonder house. I am holding the five francs pressed in my palm again. It is cold in my hand; but a hot, tingling sensation goes through me at its contact. I have decided to spend it, and I shall never seek the man who forced it upon me. In my imagination the Seine sounds in my ears as I heard it so many times before. The murmur is like the spirit of a loved one calling its own into a mysterious land of rest.

. . . . . .

Lady Jane's American is with her. I hear his voice, deep, musical, and resonant; but I can't follow his conversation, for he speaks in French. I surmise that Lady Jane doesn't understand English.

I have met Lady Jane Grey several times. She is prettier than I thought her at first, although her eyes contract into narrow slits when she looks at me. I love to listen to the voice of her American. It is a familiar voice,

ringing clearer than the bell in the church tower at home. Tears blind me until I can't see to write.

I have promised Captain Zadie to wait for her. She wants to tell me something very important tonight. We'll have coffee as soon as she comes home.

. . . . . .

When Captain Zadie knocked at my door and asked me to her room, I nearly flew out of my skin, I was so glad.

I was surprised to find Lady Jane sitting in my large chair. I took the divan. She smiled lazily, splendidly. With her rounded chin supported on one small hand, she reminded me of a beautiful cat that lifts its furry back and rubs your dress when you speak to it.

But Lady Jane doesn't like me. I suppose it's the natural antipathy the French have for other nationalities. Still, she loves her American, and he is of my country.

Zadie and Lady Jane talked rapidly in French for about five minutes. I could hear the words "American bank," and understood other expressions that made me realize that they were talking about me. Presently Lady Jane rose languidly and, nodding to me, went out. Zadie told me that Lady Jane doesn't like me.

"Eet ees because you ees more pretty than she. Jeanne doesn't like pretty women. She ees afraid for her man to see you."

"She needn't be," I replied seriously; "for I don't want to know anyone who loves her."

"He does not luf her," responded Zadie, helping herself to coffee. "He makes her angry weez the whole world. He ees only trying to help her. She lufs heem."

"If he isn't in love with her, then," said I, "he couldn't love me."

"You ees his countrywoman: that ees why Jeanne fears.

I ees her friend, too. One time she safed my Violetta — that leetle dog, you know — from getting into what you call the pound. And now she say send you away and that I mak you leave thees house now, at once. She haf fears for her *bon ami* to see you."

My upper lip curled. "Lady Jane need not fear: her friend is safe as far as I am concerned." But I can't forget the voice, the tones so tenderly familiar, of the cocotte's American, and I know that my reply had been piqued from me.

For a few seconds after this declaration Captain Zadie looked into my face. I gazed back at her. Tonight would decide my fate. I had to work!

Violetta, the tiny dog, curled comfortably in my lap. I was content to remain silent until my companion spoke, revolving in my mind the events of the last few weeks, which had blackened my whole horizon as the rising of a sudden storm darkens the summer's sun. I understand now something of what life means,— to have nothing before one but — tears — despondency — and the river Seine.

Suddenly Zadie rose and threw away the small end of the cigarette. "I wish you could lif here weez me, in my room," said she; "but I have *ma mère* (my mother), you know, and it takes much money. For a leetle while you be beggar — good cocotte — *Donnez moi un cadeau cocotte* — See?"

That hateful word sickened me. It dinned in my ears and seared itself indelibly on my brain. At first I had thought it the Open Sesame of hope: now it was abhorrent. Of course, Captain Zadie could not add another burden to her already heavy load. Her mother,— oh, she has someone to love! — while I — And with the thought of the new forlornness that had come to me in so short a time I buried my face in Violetta's soft fur and wept.

As she searched my face, Captain Zadie remained silent. I saw her lips twitch.

"Eet ees not easy the firs' start," she muttered in an unsteady way. "*Mon Dieu!* eet ees not! But one mus' lif. You be good, you see? You beg. You ask, '*Donnez moi un cadeau*'— that ees all."

The satyrlike face of the man who had lured me to the dark hallway rose before me. I shuddered — the pain about my heart made me writhe for minutes.

I, like thousands of others, was to earn my bread in the dark corners of Boulevard St. Michel — I was to become one of that mass of weary women I had mistaken for cloak models. From the bottom of my aching heart I pitied them; but most of all myself. It seemed to me like giving the greatest and most sympathetic pity to the dying man instead of the dead one.

"You preety, sleem, and American," Captain Zadie burst forth. "You get many presents; you soon go to you country. Don't cry, leetle fool!"

I crept back to my room and fell into bed. A terrifying sensation of despair swept over me. In my mental disorder I could hear the murmuring of the river, calling over and over its invitation to rest. It was the only way to escape Boulevard St. Michel. Of all Paris I love the river best. I went to sleep, and it was three o'clock in the afternoon before I opened my eyes.

At first I could not imagine what woke me. Then I realized that it was the voice of Lady Jane's American— so clear, so firm, so tinged with the richness of the land in which he was born! I could but turn over and bury my face in the pillow. America! America! Darling land of my birth! Never shall I see thee again! Today is the last, the very last, day I shall live!

Louder and more pleading came the voice from Lady Jane's room. Then she answered in her lazy, exquisite

French, and I imagined that she lolled on the divan like a purring tigress, her eyes half closed, her lithe body stretched in the fullness of its every beautiful curve.

In the last few days the view of life has changed completely. I have turned a dangerous corner, and a gruesome vista, widened and broadened by experience, lies before me. The girl of yesterday is a woman of today,— a homeless, heartsick woman.

The even flow of Lady Jane's French mingled with the entreaty of her companion. If I could but understand! Captain Zadie said that he prays continually for the cocotte's conversion.

Suddenly Zadie's words came into my mind: "Jeanne burns a candle every day before the Virgin Mary for the love of her American."

"And does burning a candle help her?" I had asked.

"Eet bring her the man," Zadie had answered, "if the blessed Virgin theenks good."

"What does she say when she prays?"

"Fife Hail Marys and one Our Father, and fife Holy Marys."

I listened intently as Zadie quoted the prayers to me; for I was ignorant of a religion that made a Paris cocotte kneel before the Mother of Christ and beg the love of a man. Captain Zadie said that Jane once knelt so near the beautiful image of the Mother that her tears dropped upon the folds of the blessed robe and washed some of the gilt off. Lady Jane went out quickly, fearing the *suisse* would curse her for such desecration. I'm hugging the thought that I, too, need a religion.

If the Blessed Mother answered Lady Jane, couldn't she help me? Five Hail Marys! And Five Holy Marys! How could I repeat those sacred words? I had never learned them. I didn't know how to cross myself. I had often seen the penitents at the foot of the altar; but had

not noticed the symbolic motions of repentance. I knew only the Lord's Prayer.

I hastened into my clothes, and hurried out into Boulevard St. Michel — over the river at which I gave scarcely a glance — on and to the Notre Dame to burn some candles. Before leaving my room I had taken the little change that remained of the five francs given me by the dark Frenchman. I would offer my all to the Holy Mother! I knew not how to express my desire in the rhythmic words of the Roman Catholic faith; but if there is such a being as the Mother of Christ, if she lives beyond the clouds and the blue, then she will understand.

The church of Notre Dame loomed up before me; two tall towers lifted themselves into the mist that hung over the city. The curved figures of stone upon the façade represented every mood in the trial of life. One long line of sinners weighed in the balance of Satan's scales were being tied together by small, grinning stone devils who were leading the captives into the lower regions. I fully believe that the tormented souls received their first temptation in the boulevards of Paris. The panic-stricken faces of the tortured mortals, roped in by Satan, seemed to be typical of the terrible life into which I had been thrust. With fast gathering tears, I turned into the church. The altar of the Blessed Virgin, adorned with a few burning candles, was the first thing that arrested my eyes.

Making my wants known by pointing to the small flickering, I offered my sous, and followed the example of a woman with a long veil who knelt before the altar.

Touching the candle to another, I stood it upon one of the little pointed steel pins used to hold the tapers, and knelt beside the woman in black. Through my fingers, as I bowed reverently before the time-honored Mother of the World's Savior, the bitterest tears of my short years rained.

"Our Father which art in Heaven
Hallowed be thy name —"

I repeated.

I felt a touch upon my shoulder. A man with a serious expression and closely drawn eyebrows stood over me. He muttered in English:

"Mademoiselle has forgotten to cross herself."

I only dropped my head in reply.

The man moved away with a whispered petition. He must have known that I was a novice at saying Catholic prayers. My eyes reverted to the Holy Mother, and my thought to my great need.

"Hail Mary —" I began, and stopped. Then, with an onward rush of emotion, I gasped, "Mother, for the sake of the precious Child you hold to your heart, forgive my ignorance. Keep me from taking the life which God, thy Father and mine, hath given me. For the love of the Savior to whom thou gavest His mortal life, give me bread to eat. I am sick at heart — alone — afraid — imploring for the sake of Jesus that I may live."

It was all the Hail and the Holy Marys that I knew. Then I rose to my feet, leaving the other woman to mutter out her prayers. I felt frightened at the call of the river no longer, nor did I hold out my hands to the swiftly flowing water. Somehow, the faith in the Holy Mother had taken my distress from me. I felt that the unburdening of my heart before the altar was the one thing that had saved my life and my soul, and that I could din *Donnez moi un cadeau* into the ears of every man wandering in the boulevards of Paris and yet be safe. I came back to St. Michel with but a backward glance at the river which now seemed to spell my name with whispered hope.

CHAPTER V

I DID not tell Captain Zadie that I had offered a prayer for my life — she didn't know that I had intended taking it. When I sat with her before coming in here, she asked me what success I had had in the boulevards.

"I have four francs," I said weakly. "It is nearly all in sous, too."

Zadie crossed herself as the woman in black had done. I noticed that she did it with her right hand. When I go to church again, I shall remember that.

"Four francs!" she ejaculated. "Eet ees more than I haf taken. But you ees pretty, while I —" she sighed and crossed herself again. "Tell me about eet. You see men, who pinched your arms an' deed — *comme ça* — like that, to your — what you call eet? — chin."

"Yes," I confirmed truthfully.

"An' you deed not smile at them?" She scrutinized my face with a sharp glance.

"I told you I would not, and I didn't."

My wealth made my heart throb madly. *Donnez moi un cadeau* had saved me from the river. Out of evil had come great good, and the Mother with her Holy Child had directed my feet into a path whereby I might live.

I laughed at Violetta as she tried to spring to my lap. She tumbled down; but her second effort succeeded in anchoring her on my knees. She stretched out her four paws, and with a contented whine went to sleep.

"You see," I resumed, "I kept thinking of what you said to me,— that if I were successful, I could go back

to America,— and when I said *Donnez moi un cadeau* I felt sure that I would get something. Look at all this!"

I held the coppers in my fingers, and counted over the precious money.

Captain Zadie then told me she was positive that the "leetle American fool" could soon go back to the land of her birth.

. . . . . .

I came home a little while ago from the *pâtisserie*. As I came Zadie handed me a piece of paper.

"Keep eet about you somewhere," she advised. "The police ees been here, an' I told heem you was my sister, Christobel McCall. They not know your true name. With that you will not be stopped by the police. You can beg and no fear."

I did not answer a word; for shame ran through every nerve in my body, and a sickening realization of degradation grew in my heart until I almost felt that death was preferable to this licensed life of a beggar on the Paris boulevards.

. . . . . .

A long time has gone by. I'm hoarding every coin with avidity, and handle it like a miser, whose glistening eyes and trembling fingers are the signs of his delight at the cold touch of money. I, too, love it dearly. Through money I shall return to the shores of my beloved America, and no one will ever know of this one dark stain on my life. With my whole soul I loathe the Boulevard St. Michel; but the gleanings from it mean existence.

. . . . . .

I have just counted over my money again. In four weeks I have managed to save five dollars.

A sudden idea has made me catch my breath. Can I go back to America alone and penniless? Why shouldn't I beg enough money to train my voice, which one day may

bring me all that a woman can desire,— fame, money, and — love. Yes, even *he* may one day hear me and wonder, not knowing the dark places through which I have been dragged to get my pearl.

. . . . . .

Every day I have taken delight in listening to the voice of Lady Jane's visitor. I like it because it reminds me of home.

This morning I had a great surprise. I received a letter from Casperone Larodi. He desires to know where I am.

"I love you as it is not possible for me to love another woman," he wrote. "I cannot marry you now; but I would help you gladly, if you will permit me. I have my own apartment, to which you are more than welcome. I have spent much time in looking for you; but without avail, so I address this letter to your banker, who will give me no information about you. I know that you do not go to the bank for your letters, because I have stationed myself in front of the door for many days, not even moving for *déjeuner*. Where are you, Dear? If this follows you to America, will you write to me, if only because of my great love? You will always be first in my heart, even if I should be forced to marry another woman."

I shall never see Casperone again,— he is as far from the vista of my life and my future as my present is from my past of yesterday. I have written him a short note saying that I don't wish to see him. He will never think of looking for me over here. I rarely cross the river into newer Paris, lest I meet some of my former acquaintances. I had rather live on the Boulevard St. Michel for the rest of my life than go to Casperone! *Donnez moi un cadeau* — Dear God! to what depths have I fallen! How I hate this moving lantern show of furtive nighthawks and painted women!

. . . . . .

Tonight I had an experience that took me back months to the dear days of respectability.

For sometime after leaving home this evening, I could not bring myself to open my lips. *Donnez moi un cadeau* refused to be framed, even in tremulous tones. Near the *rue* leading to the Panthéon I heard a voice murmur in my ear:

"*Bon soir, Mademoiselle.*"

"I do not speak French," I replied frigidly.

"Oh, English!" said he in broken tones. "I speak English, too. I lived in London and New York for awhile. Come with me and have something to drink."

The voice was kindly, although the French ring in it was unmistakable. The eyes were dark and piercing, and raven curls clustered from beneath a soft hat.

"I don't drink," I replied; "but I thank you."

"Then some sparkling water or grenadine — yes?"

It had been a long time since I had talked English to anyone save Zadie, and I allowed myself to be persuaded.

"You are an American?" he asked, removing his hat and great coat.

I nodded.

"Yes? That's nice. I like American women. Once I was in New York for three years."

I vaguely wondered how anyone who had ever lived in that country of homes and contentment could be satisfied in Paris. But his critical scrutiny brought me back to the present. Into his eyes shot signs of recognition. I could not hide my agitation, nor could I speak to aid him in his search for my identity.

"Ah! I remember!" he exclaimed. "How strange and yet how delightful! It was one night at the Waldorf in New York with — oh, that Colonel — what is his name?" With a characteristic gesture of the French, he tapped his forehead as if to aid his memory.

"Coster," I replied. I could scarcely breathe.

"Yes, Coster — I was there at that dinner as the guest of Roger Everard."

My face was purple with embarrassment. He had uttered the one name sacred to me — the name I had enshrined in my heart as the ancient Greeks enshrined their gods!

"I remember now," I gasped. "I saw you once."

"Yes, only once; but my memory is good. How is it that you are here, and above all how came you out at such a time of night?"

In my consternation I sought for an answer to his question. "My tooth ached dreadfully last night," I said; "so, fearing I should have another attack, I came out in search of a chemist."

"It is not wise for a beautiful young girl to go out alone in Paris," he chided slowly.

"Oh, in America we have no fear in the streets; at least, not in my home town."

He reddened as he begged to be pardoned for his rudeness in speaking to me. "I was lonely," he said in explanation, "and that must be my excuse for my rude behavior. Will you pardon me?"

It must have been through the intervention of some higher power that he had accosted me instead of my begging a gift from him. I was so thankful, so thankful — for he was a friend of Roger Everard's!

"I was lonely, too," I answered, "and so you have no reason to offer any apologies to me. I was not compelled to come with you, you know; but I felt glad when I heard you speak English." This pleased him. "I am studying here," I went on quietly, "and you won't be displeased if I do not ask you to call upon me? I give very little time to pleasure. I am trying to master the language also."

"I should like to take you to the opera some evening, if

you will go. Why not? It will give you a splendid idea of French stage work. You may choose your own time. Your name is — Miss Fitzpatrick?"

I nodded my head; but said that I couldn't accept his invitation.

On my way home I shivered when I thought how little he knew that I slept the entire day and spent the night on Boulevard St. Michel. Oh, if I could but once throw off this shell of deceit and go to the opera! It would take only a few francs to get ready; but I can't spare them. Francs mean singing lessons, and possibly — Roger Everard. The name rings in my brain as past events toss before me. Roger Everard is my ideal of manhood,— so tall, so kindly eyed and courteous. Suddenly it came to me as a revelation that I had used him as a standard by which to measure every man I met. Now I know that I love him! If Lady Jane burns candles for her American, why shouldn't I burn one for Roger Everard? I had hoped, I still hope, to make him proud of me.

. . . . . .

I burned another candle at four o'clock this afternoon. Zadie has taught me how to cross myself; but the five Hails and Holy Marys I can't remember. But I am satisfied that I shall see Roger again, and that he will care a little — and that I shall then be as happy as I am now unhappy. Lady Jane's visitor was with her when I went out. His voice charms and magnetizes me more and more. Possibly it is because I can trace a resemblance to another voice in America.

. . . . . .

Paris grows more wonderful hour by hour, and I'm looking with enlightened eyes upon everything.

Under Captain Zadie's room lives another girl named Babette. She is beautiful, and no bigger than a child of

twelve. Her flashing black eyes grow fierce, then tender, as she pours out her even, liquid French. I like to watch her when she speaks with Zadie. I always know when she mentions her sweetheart. Emotion deepens the color of her eyes, and they grow drowsy and altogether lovely. Her lover, Anatole Beaucault, designs her hats and dresses. She goes into raptures over his taste, and commented to us upon his broad shoulders, height, and strength. He never looks to the left or right as he passes. It is known about the quarter here that he loves Babette passionately. Captain Zadie says that the small girl gives him fifty francs a week, and that he is studying medicine and art. She also says that the girl finds her happiness in earning money for him. I can't imagine how a man can allow a tiny tot of humanity to supply his needs. Strange people, these French!

I saw them tonight, and the memory makes my head whirl yet. Directly in front of the School of Pharmacy a long line of students marched toward me. They walked two abreast and sang a rollicking college song. Their heads were covered with broad, flat hats, and their long black robes swept loosely to the ground. As they neared and passed under an electric light, something white attracted my attention. One large man walked some paces ahead, and others followed with the even tread of soldiers. The white object was suspended from the neck of the tall leader. Like the pendulum of a clock it swung to and fro with lithe grace, the sharp, willowy outlines enhanced by the light overhead. They came slowly closer, and I saw that the white object was Babette. She was clinging to the neck of her giant lover while he flung her from side to side like a babe. Her taut, white arms were bare to the shoulders, and the black, fluffy hair, loosened by the wind, swept in all directions. At intervals she fastened her red lips to the dark cheek of the student, her tender, wicked

eyes closing as if in delicious ecstasy. Anatole walked majestically, lifting his arms in French gestures to keep time to the song he sang. I leaned against the railings and allowed them to pass. Captain Zadie told me when I described it to her that if any man had dared to touch even Babette's dress he would have been dead in an instant.

Yet the girl in the white dress who clung to her lover's neck is nothing more nor less than a boulevard cocotte!

CHAPTER VI

WHAT a long, long time I've been here! The four months that have slipped away have taught me many things; but I can never forget that I am but a simple Paris vagabond. I say, *Donnez moi un cadeau, s'il vous plaît*, as glibly as if I had spoken French all my life. Every time I ask a sou and receive a franc, I feel as elated as a hungry boy who has begged bread and with it was given cheese. But money does come in slowly. My really happy hours are spent with Zadie, and I've studied every spare moment on French. She encourages me to speak in her tongue. I find myself writing in this book French words, exclamations, and easy sentences quite naturally.

Last night when I was drinking coffee and Zadie was clearing the table she asked me again about Roger Everard.

"Ees he a good man, *Chérie?*"

"Oh, so good!" I said quickly. "He's an artist, and sometime will be very great. Oh, yes, I know he is good."

"How you know?"

I hesitated, with the coffee cup suspended in the air. "I only know that I think so," I replied meditatively. "He could not be otherwise, with his face and manners. I don't believe he ever did a wicked thing in his life."

"Some day you will marry heem, eh?"

My blood tingled through my veins with joy at the thought. "He hasn't asked me," I said, dropping my eyes. "I've seen him only a few times."

"Perhaps he marry another girl, while you —"

Her hesitation brought bitter words from my lips. "While I'm begging on the boulevards! Dear Heaven! What a terrible thought! But, Zadie dear, I remember how he looked at me. He really acted as if he cared for me."

"Men ees all alike," she grunted.

"No, they're not, Zadie, they can't be," I contradicted, comparing in my mind Casperone Larodi with Roger Everard.

"Eet ees not to make you think less of your Protestant lover," said she, "that I say again, a woman who lufs a man ees lost."

I shook my head and replied in a low voice, "Zadie, I am afraid I am fond of him. Although I haven't seen him many times, he is in my thoughts all through my waking hours."

I raise my cup nervously to my lips. Life on the Boulevard St. Michel had changed my ideas; yet there rose before my mind's eye the earnest face of Roger Everard and his brilliant smile that day, long ago, when he accepted Aunty's invitation to dinner, in dear old New Hampshire. He was what God intended him to be,— a clean-minded, noble-souled American, destined to be a great artist. This satisfied feeling I have as to his future goads me on to make something of myself. It is strange that I should look upon men as God's most wonderful part of creation, even in the light of my new knowledge of them.

Zadie read my thoughts and blurted out, "You will not always feels that way. They don't gif you the chance. When a girl ees a fool and trust a man and puts her life —"

"Her hopes, too," I put in, as she paused.

"— and what you like," she resumed,— "Pom! Everything ees smash and you ees weezout hope, weezout — anything!"

"Zadie," I queried, breaking a pause, "tell me about him — I mean the man who made you feel like that."

"He was Engleesh," she replied brokenly, and in sympathy Violetta opened her small mouth and whined.

"An Englishman was wicked to you?"

"*Non!* Not wicked; but I had to leaf heem. I was young then an'—"

"Pretty!" I exclaimed.

"*Oui*, I was ver' pretty."

As she spoke she halted on her way to the window with a pan of garbage suspended in her hand.

"Eet vas twenty years ago — and before I come to Boulevard St. Michel. *Ma mère, pauvre mignonne*, vas poor. She haf not 'nough for us all. Some of us ees dead now."

She cut off so shortly that I cried out:

"What an awful thing it is to be poor!"

Giving no heed to my interjection, she went on: "I vent to England to service. I work for a madame who was sweet — Engleesh — but oh, so cold! The Engleesh, they know not how to forgeeve. Forgeeveness is such a leetle thing; but when a woman does not know what a big thing life ees, forgeeveness seems not so leetle!"

She finished the last of her lengthy harangue with a huskiness that roughened her voice. In haste, she threw up the window, pressed the button for the garbage lift, and stood swallowing hard while the iron cage squeaked its way upward and stopped gratingly before her. After shifting the pan to the shelf, Zadie touched the white button and watched the lift disappear into the shadows below. Then she came slowly back with an unusual pallor on her face, spreading out her fingers expressively. I did not quite understand her gesture. She noted my puzzled expression and proceeded:

"*Mignonne*, I ees sad for you. You will learn right

enough, very soon — ah, yes, ver' soon, *ma chérie. Pauvre mignonne!*"

But she did not explain what she meant, and I hastened her on with her story:

"After I had been there a long time, I remembered I was ver' happy. I was learning to spik Engleesh. Madame's son came home, an' he told me he lufed me."

"No wonder he loved you, Zadie!" I exclaimed as she stopped again. "You must have been a perfect dear when you were young."

"I tell you he said he lufed me, an' so he deed then; but eet was only a man's luf, lasting one day, one week, *ma chérie*, and after that — zt! no more!" She snapped her fingers fiercely.

"Poor Zadie!" I murmured; for in my mind I saw the picture of the lonely little French girl and the young master whose love was given at such usurer's rates.

"Well, there ees not much more," Zadie said grimly, taking up her darning. "I lef' England because hees mother made me. I lef' heem an'—"

"And what?" I asked breathlessly. "And what, Zadie?"

Her raddled, kindly face grew softer, her eyes dim.

"There was a *bébé* — a *bébé*. His mother say I mus' gif her the leetle child, and go away to France. She say it was for Rupert's sake. Oh, Mignonne, my heart was torn! I lufed my *bébé* — oh, I lufed heem! He was Engleesh, such a fine boy! But I knew what a life he would haf with me. I thought of my *bébé* here in Paris weez a mother he could not be — well, my *chérie*, proud of; so I keesed heem goodby one day, came away, and never went back."

"Is he living," I asked after a few moments; for I respected the twitching of her lips, and the endeavor to hide her emotion,—"the child, I mean?"

"*Oui;* but hees father ees dead. I read eet in the paper. My boy ees nineteen now; but he ees never to know about hees mother."

I imagined a typical English home and a handsome boy of nineteen, Zadie's child, living, perhaps, the methodical, provincial life of England, and I ejaculated:

"No, of course not! Of course not!"

Then I felt sorry that I had said it; for Zadie's face drew down in pain. She walked to the window and looked out into the darkness. Ashamed, I followed her.

"I only meant, Dear," I tried to explain, putting my arms round her neck, "that the boy would suffer if he thought his mother were — here."

"*Oui,* he would. He thinks hees mother ees there weez him," said she. "I never sleep or wake that I not long to see my boy. I lufed hees father so! Eet is like that, the life of us."

Here ensued a silence so prolonged that Violetta whined again, and presently put up her little paws as a gentle reminder that she preferred a warm lap to the drafts of the floor.

All at once a light flaring from a window above us cast a pantomime of moving shadows on the whitewashed wall of the house at the back of the garden. We saw the clear silhouette of a man gesticulating to the shadow of a woman. Immediately afterward appeared the image of a second man holding a bundle in his arms which he held out toward the woman. Zadie and I pressed closer to the window to distinguish where the silent drama was being played; but before we could solve the mystery a curtain was drawn and the garden was in darkness.

"Ees you ever going to tell him — your man, of your life here?" Zadie asked later, when we had pulled the curtains and were seated in the lighted room.

"No, no!" I cried. "I can't — I can't! To him I

want to be the best girl in all the world — the very best. I think of him all through the night on the boulevards, and when I come home I pray for him so hard, so fervently, that if there is a God I know He will answer. I had rather have his love and his thoughts than all the money in France!"

"You would be a bad, bad girl, Pheelis, if —"

I shivered and pushed Violetta to the floor. She gave a forlorn yap and ran to Zadie.

"My love for Roger Everard will keep me as good as nothing else can, Dear."

"Poor leetle American fool!" Zadie observed grimly. "The man you luf will be your enemy, the most terreeble enemy in the world,— more terreeble than the boulevard with all eets ugly ways, all eets bad men,— thees beautiful man you luff."

"Hush, Zadie, hush! He could lift me to the very light of Heaven if he should tell me that he loved me —" Then, catching myself together, my voice trailed off into silence. I am sometimes ashamed of my hot, demanding blood.

"He breeng you down to hell, more likely," Zadie said, setting her lips and nursing her knee. "Eet ees only men we luf who do that. I think you ees no different from other women. You will go through eet, *Chérie*, you will go through eet, like Zadie! And look at me!"

The great, dyed red head was poised like that of an angry animal. Her eyes deepened beneath their blackened lashes. Then, with a half bitter laugh, she shrugged her shoulders and patted my hand. I could read in her face a genuine love for me.

Before I could answer, the piercing cry of a child broke in upon us. It came from somewhere near the roof-line. We both rose to our feet.

"Was eet a cat?" asked Zadie after a moment.

"No," said I; "it was a child, a very young child, and suffering, I know."

Going to the window and pulling back the curtain, I looked out into the night. I discerned the dim outline of a cat prowling on the garden fence; but I knew the sound had not come from this stealthy animal, half hidden by the dead, tossing vines. For several minutes Zadie stood beside me. Twice again the scream rang out far above our heads; but the second cry was stopped by a nursing bottle — so Zadie said. The cries were so different from those which would have come from the healthy lungs of a hungry babe!

"That makes me theenk," put in Zadie, when we had reseated ourselves. "I read in the afternoon paper that a lady lifing in the Bois has lost her *bébé*."

"How?" I inquired.

"Someone stole eet, poor soul! There — read eet."

I took the paper and caught the name of Larodi. Then I passed it back to Zadie.

"Tell me what it says: I can't read it all," I implored.

"That a woman — rich — her husband ees dead — had a leetle new *bébé*. Someone took eet away from her yesterday."

"How wicked!" I exclaimed. "And, Zadie, I know the woman's family. Her people were some of my first friends in Paris."

"Not ver' good friends," grunted Zadie.

The loss of Count Larodi's little nephew passed quickly from my mind; but just before I tumbled into bed I wondered if the little lost child were back again safe in its mother's arms.

CHAPTER VII

ZADIE was frying a bit of meat when I ran into her rooms.

"That child's cry haunted me all the time I was sleeping," I said, going to the window. "Have you heard it again?"

"No; I think it was hungry, that ees all."

"But it was in this house, above us."

"Oh, perhaps some girl has her *bébé* weez her," replied Zadie. "The leetle thing was hungry. Sit down and eat."

It was almost four o'clock in the afternoon and already getting dusk. Zadie lighted the smoky lamp, cut two huge pieces of bread from a long loaf, and we began our meal. We were unusually melancholy, and ate our dinner with but few words. Suddenly, without the slightest warning, we were terrorized into action by another scream breaking from above, and echoing and reëchoing about our ears. Zadie pushed her chair back heavily. I ran to the window and looked up. There was the noise of a closing sash; then all was quiet.

Just before dinner, Zadie had drawn up the garbage lift and had forgotten to lower it. In a moment of impulse I opened the window, and before she could object stepped into the cage, touched the button, and was carried slowly upward. I felt I must find that child. It might be alone and in danger.

Crouching in the iron cage, I kept my eye to the chain hole. Passing each floor, I saw the inmate of the room

still in bed, sleeping her tired sleep after the long night's work.

At the top, before a cracked window, the car came to a standstill. A bare-floored room, lighted by a single little lamp, shown blurred and indistinct through the dirty pane. The sash slipped up as I touched it, and I could see strange apparatus and poisonous looking messes in bottles on the shelves.

The place was as silent as a tomb,— silent with a mystery that congealed my blood and froze my heart within me. I was looking upon a secret room the like of which I had never seen before. I had only to touch the button of the lift again to glide safely back to Zadie; but at that moment my spirit of investigation grew stronger than my fear, and I stepped over the sill into the room. With bated breath I silently moved forward a pace. My foolhardy action was stayed by a voice speaking English in another room.

"Where does that draft come from?"

A woman's guttural voice fretfully replied, "I don't know, nor care, Abbott."

"All right, then. Let's give the brat a drink. That fellow'll be here in a minute."

I heard them coming toward me, the woman's heels clicking as she walked. My knees shook under me. I would go back by the way I had come! I turned breathlessly about and flung one foot over the windowsill, at the same time fumbling for the button to start the lift. In my excitement my fingers could not find the small knob.

By staying where I was, I should certainly be found; for the person with the deep voice was already near the doorway, and even if I bent in the lift I should be discovered. A hasty survey of the room disclosed a cupboard with an open door. I turned back, lightly crossed to it,

pushed the door wider, slipped in, partly closed it after me, and sank into the dark corner.

The horror of the awful place grew upon me, almost making me witless. I shook like an aspen leaf. It was an unknown fear that decided me to stay hidden until I could escape unnoticed. The footsteps coming nearer arrested my loud breathing. A man in house-slippers, without a coat, halted in the doorway. He was young, short, and solidly built, with hair hanging in thick strands over a high forhead.

"The window is open, confound it!" he growled in English. "And that damned concierge has sent the lift up here. Anyone would think we sent garbage down a dozen times a day."

He leaned forward, touched the button, and the lift creaked out of sight. The window rolled down, and I was left with no visible means of escape. The man's presence filled me with a sense of terrible danger, and I longed wildly to be downstairs with Zadie.

Suddenly from the floor, close by my side, came the prolonged, harassed cry of a child. I shrank back frightened into the corner. The man growled something I didn't catch, gave the cupboard door a kick, banging it in my face, and I was in darkness.

A scraping noise sounding at my left aroused me. Stealthily I put out my hand, groping over the thing. It was the warm, curly head of a young infant who was strapped to a board like an Indian's papoose, with a bandage drawn closely over its forehead. I dared not loosen it, fearing the child might cry again; but I ran my fingers over the small body. Then I remembered that the rooms were over Zadie's. These must have been built on the same plan. The cupboard was a long one with two doors. The child must be almost opposite the other door.

The man outside grunted irritably, rose, opened the cup-

board door farthest from me, and shoved in a huge hand. The child was dragged out, and I dared say no word. The little fellow must have been hurt by the movement; but as he cried sharply the man caught the sound in his fat hand. A tiny crack in the panel of the door made it possible for my eyes to follow the movements of those in the room, and a powerful desire to learn the fate of the babe possessed me and covered my body with a cold sweat. The woman placed herself in a chair, and the fat fellow, with the child stretched out, bound to a board with four separate cords, sat facing her. I couldn't imagine what they were about to do.

"The blasted little creature doesn't seem to respond very well to the treatment," said the fat man. "It doesn't seem to have made the slightest impression upon him. He's a tough little beggar, damn him!"

His companion replied something in broken English.

"It isn't safe to let the brat yelp," went on the man; "but he can't breathe if his mouth is covered. Give him a drink."

Avidly the child sucked the milk from the spoon. What were they going to do with it, and what was their object in strapping it to the board?

A light rap at the outside door caused them to slip the babe back to its place beside me. The milk had slightly soothed the child, and I imagined that it was becoming used to the hurt; for it was only a whimper that lifted up from the darkness. As I put my hand gently down upon the bandaged head, I had a desire to scream, to grasp the child from the floor and fly. But between me and freedom was the short man and the woman who rolled her words upward from her throat. Another knock, and the man slipped back the bolt, stepped aside, and allowed a figure to pass in. The instant the door closed the bolt shot back to its position. After the curt words of greeting had

passed between them, I bent lower to see the newcomer's face. Casperone Larodi, with a bundle in his arms, stood facing the fat man. The heavy-lidded blue eyes, the curled mustache, and the well-trained Vandyke were all familiar to me. Not once after that did I take my eyes from the crack in the door. I would discover some reason for the little atom at my side, the seething bottles, and Casperone's presence.

Count Larodi dropped into a chair. "A note was brought you this afternoon. You expected me?" he asked.

The fat man nodded and glanced at the woman warningly. She heeded the silent order, not moving, save to fold her hands.

"Here, take the child," said Casperone at last. "I'm dead tired of it, and I want the work well done. You hear?" He said this huskily. "It must be sure!"

"Monsieur wants the work sure, Ann. *Dis donc, dis donc!* My wife knows. 'Twill be sure enough! You don't need fear."

But the woman with a strained expression maintained silence.

"The work will be done," the man repeated again.

"When?" asked Casperone.

"Not until Monsieur is ready to tell who the child is, and why the operation is to be performed."

Count Larodi's reply was inaudible. For a moment there rose before me the picture of a woman passing fair; but it quickly faded, so absorbed was I in him.

"Do you think me an ass?" he exclaimed presently. "Do you really think I am going to place myself in your hands? If God ever made a better pair of villains than you two, I'd like to see them!" Casperone's eyes flashed over the man and woman as he ended. "Your business should teach you to dispense with curiosity."

A curious half-smile flitted over the fat man's face, and he allowed his gaze to rest upon the woman.

"God made us to do service for such as you," he answered, turning slightly in his chair. "Never for one moment get it into your head that we would cause you any worry afterward. We only want to be sure of the man we're dealing with, and to drag you, Monsieur, into the mud as deeply as we go into the mire. It is a rule of this establishment not to deal with anyone who hasn't sufficient money to stand by us if we get into trouble. And then, too, we want to know what to do with the child, if you should happen to die — to carry out Monsieur's plans, that's all."

After a moment's reflection, Casperone said in a hard voice, "He is my brother's child, and I bribed its nurse yesterday to take it from its mother."

I sickened, nearly fainted; for I realized that this man was not only unprincipled — my own experience had taught me that — but also a criminal. I now knew who was responsible for the kidnapping of the baby of which Zadie and I had read.

Just at that moment another whimper rose from my side. Again I touched the bandaged head, easing the edge of the rubber strap with the tips of my fingers.

"You say the work is very sure?" asked Casperone, after meditation.

"Is the work sure, Ann?"

Abbott said this to the woman cunningly; but she made no reply, merely raised her hand deprecatingly, giving a sidelong glance at the Count. The sly question and answering gestures sounded a child's death knell.

"I wish it were over," was all Casperone said, rising and going toward the window, a sinister expression darkening his face. It was intermingled with fear, hesitation, and disgust.

I flushed with shame as I remembered his impassioned words to me, his protestations about love and marriage.

Not for one moment did I take my fingers from under the strap on the curly little head at my elbow. The hurt baby and I were becoming fast friends. Oh! how I should have liked — but there was the whining baby in the woman's lap to think of. It lay unrolled from the several blankets that had protected it from the cold. Only God in Heaven knew whether or not I should be able to save both babies and myself; but of this I was resolved: If I ever left those rooms alive, those two babies should go with me! I knew who the fat baby was; but the other, the tiny sufferer at my side, was a little stranger to me. If I could only tear the rubber band, or loosen it some way! But I dared not, fearing another scream.

Casperone was speaking again. "It is not very pleasant," he remarked, returning to his chair, with his gloves in his hand, "to uncover family skeletons before strangers."

"My Lord is with friends," said the fat man obsequiously.

"Of course, of course, I know; but how long — will it take to complete that job?"

"It depends upon what you want done," was the reply.

Casperone pointed his forefinger at the rosy-faced child who was now looking quietly at the lamplight with that wise expression that rests in the eyes of all young children.

"You see, the fact is," he explained, "that this child must lose its identity. Its mother is my sister-in-law, and if it hadn't been for this brat I should have come in for some money from my dead brother. And with the fortune I should have been able to marry a girl I love. I do not want the child to die. I can stand anything but murder. Murder would mean the loss of our heads, if it came to light."

He glanced significantly from Abbott to the woman. Over the dark face of Ann swept an expression of terror, and the fat man moved uneasily in his chair.

"The mother will never recognize her baby in a blind beggar!" The Count's voice pronounced the words carefully.

Again the picture of the stolen baby's mother flashed to my mind. My fingers itched to carry it back to her; but it seemed hopeless when I considered the obstacles to be overcome.

A whine at my side — I had forgotten to lift the rubber strap; for the little fellow outside had claimed my attention for a minute.

"Don't use methods that are apt to kill him," Casperone broke in, with an ugly smile. "What I want done will allow him a means of livelihood. I only want him to pass his life —"

"In darkness," added the fat man, his eyes roving over the woman contemplatively. "Then Monsieur will pay the money now?"

"Yes."

"What shall we do with the child later?"

"I'll tell you that when I'm ready. Keep it here until I notify you. How much money do you want tonight?"

After some parleying between the men a sum was paid, large and exorbitant,— the price of the wondering blue eyes of the infant,— baby eyes that searched the light for the mystery of the shining!

In another moment Casperone was gone, leaving a huge roll of notes and the young babe. Now was the time to make some plan! I could not rescue the children unless I took them with me, and I knew where to go if I could once get out of that door through which Casperone had disappeared. If there were only the woman to face! But the man, too!

Through the crack my eye measured as accurately as possible the distance from the child on the chair to the door. Silently I lifted the infant beside me to ascertain its weight. It was such a tiny creature! If I could fasten it about me somewhere so as to have both hands ready for the new baby, I should make an effort to escape. Just as this thought took root in my brain, the woman rose from the chair and came directly toward the cupboard.

"*Dis donc, dis donc!*" growled Abbott. "Let the brat alone when he's quiet. Sit down!"

Obediently the woman dropped into her chair. At the same time the little baby gasped sleepily, making a wee gurgling sound that went to my heart.

"We'll be getting out of this place before long," went on Abbott.

"Are we going very soon?" asked Ann. "Aren't we going to — to operate on that child?" The words came hesitatingly from her lips.

"Yes."

"I don't like the work, Abbott. It seems —"

"Don't trouble your head about making it seem anything, Ann. We've got to have money! You do as I say, you hear?"

"Yes, Abbott."

"Then go like a good girl to the kitchen and get something ready to eat. I'll be in after a bit. Get some hot soup: the room's cold. We won't be here much longer, Ann," the man continued; "so don't cry."

"It hasn't been an easy life, Abbott; but I love you — that's why I stay, I s'pose."

She went out, closing the door, and her footsteps sounded from the inner room.

I prayed that I might be given strength to carry the wee babe back to its mother: to the other one, Zadie and I

would give refuge. But the first great problem that faced me before disposing of the babies was to get them from this room with its shadow of hideous mystery. The little one on the chair still gazed sleepily at the light, and for a few moments the fat man sat watching it. I should have given much to have read his thoughts. I wanted to know what vice had brought him to such an occupation as this. Slowly and almost mechanically he leaned over and pulled a piece of thread from the child's puckered fingers and straightened its body into a more comfortable position.

I wondered vaguely if it would be of use to plead with him; but the thought was frightened from my mind by his sudden rise from the chair. My heart thumped when I saw him take a bowl of seething acid from the shelf and place it on the table near him. Then he seated himself with his back to me. I stooped softly; for my hour had come. The maternal instinct rose in my heart, and with the determination of a rat ferociously gnawing its own foot from a steel trap I set my teeth into the rubber about the baby's brow, biting and chewing the strong band until I felt it glide away from the hurt flesh. The wounded head fell downward, a long cry bursting from the lips of the infant. I tore the cord from my kimono and wrapped it twice about the child. One whimper, and that was all. Adjusting the babe on my shoulders without a sound, I fastened it securely. Then, opening the door, I stepped into the lighted room, and with a sudden dash lifted the vessel from the table and threw acid and all over the fat man's head. He gave a great howl — I imagine he thought a she-devil had set upon him. I snatched the second babe from the chair, bounded to the door, unbolted it, and fled down the stairs.

The child on my back swung to and fro, its weight

straining and stretching the silken cord. The tiny one received a sounding bang on its head and emitted a loud cry just as I rounded the corner of the staircase.

I could hear the terrific, maddened cries from the man above, and for one short minute pity stirred my soul; but I knew that the woman with the sad face and guttural voice was with him — for she loved him. I opened Zadie's door and tumbled in, and all I could say was:

"Zadie! Zadie darling! Dear God! I have them both!"

CHAPTER VIII

IT was Zadie's suggestion that I should go to the Bois to restore the Larodi baby to its mother. Although I feared meeting Casperone, it would be one of Heaven's delights to see her receive back her stolen child.

"I simply don't dare go, Zadie," I said slowly.

"You must go, *ma petite!* You warn the mother to nefer let that bad uncle see the leetle boy again — you want heem to steal it back?"

"Of course I don't, Zadie, and I suppose I must go; but I'm afraid."

"*Oui, oui!* Pom! afraid, after what you haf tonight done? Drink, drink, and begone with eet!"

"If it all becomes public, Zadie, and they find me out, keep my name if you can. If it were to get into the newspapers —" the mere thought made me gasp.

"I not know your name, Pheelis Fitzpatrick," said Zadie stolidly.

"If the police come and make you tell it, you simply say that I am Christobel McCall, can't you?"

"*Oui, oui!*" grunted Zadie. "Geet out!"

I went away with the baby cuddled warmly in my arms.

Fifteen minutes later I was riding through the Champs-Élysées, my heart beating so strongly that the rise and fall of my bosom acted as a cradle to the sleeping child.

My face paled as I thought of my position. What would the morrow bring out of the tragedy? What would the future bring to me? Not discovery; for but two filled my heart as I sat thinking,— America and Roger Everard!

Under the seductiveness of the lights in the Bois, stringing themselves into small stars away beyond me for miles, I gave myself up to the charm of contact with the warm young thing in my arms. I lifted the covering and caught my breath. Never had I been so close to so young an infant, never had I listened to a soft-coming baby-breath, nor felt the beat of a tender heart against mine. Several times I kissed him, allowing my lips to linger long on the pink skin. Some day, I — I — I want a baby — a lot of babies. Even now, as I think this, I feel the blood rush hot to my ears. Such a thought always brings Roger closer to me.

At the Larodi mansion, the servant confronted me with profound solemnity.

"You understand I must see her, if for only a moment," I pleaded fearfully.

"It is impossible, Mademoiselle. Impossible! Absolutely impossible! Madame is ill."

"Will you say to her that I have something to tell her — something about her child?"

The butler surveyed me from head to foot. The bundle in my arms caught his attention.

"Come in," said he.

I was given a chair in the small reception room. It was in this house that the child had been born. It was here that the young mother had vainly implored someone to find it, and it was here that it was to be given back to her unharmed.

I heard the butler whisper the message to the maid, and footsteps hurry along the corridor above. Then a tired voice called out:

"Matilda, tell me what it is."

"It's only a woman, Madame, who says —"

"That — that — she knows something about my baby?"

The stress on the last word brought a choke to my throat, and it rent me through and through. I thought of the fat man and Larodi's dark face as he gave the child to the woman.

"Then I'll see her, Matilda," came the voice again. "I'm not ill, I say! Only in my heart, you know. Do you hear? I will see her! I shall be all well, when I have my baby. I am going down — I must see her!"

I nerved myself to meet the vision that appeared. I saw a face as pale as a white rose, ears tinted with the finger of youth, a girlish body vibrant with hope, as the mother of the babe stood before me. 'Twas the same fair, sweet American girl I had seen in the picture at Countess Larodi's. Her eyes took me in as had the servant's. There we were, two women, looking deep into each other's eyes, with a little living bond of humanity drawing us together.

"You wanted to see me, Mademoiselle?" she asked kindly. "Ah, yes, my poor child! You have a baby of your own. You want me to aid you. Oh, I shall — I will! Anything you ask — for —"

Holding out the bundle, I broke out in English, "I have brought back your baby!"

Her luminous eyes were incomprehensive, widening until the lids stretched themselves to their fullest extent. Her twitching fingers dared not touch the child as I tendered it toward her.

"It is yours!" I insisted. "I have brought it home to you!" I threw back the cape, displaying the round, red, sleeping face. With no visible emotion save the catching of her breath and the flushing of the fair skin, the mother held out her arms. As in a dream, she took the baby and motioned me to follow her. We passed through the hall to a room beyond, where a bright fire invitingly shot its embers upon the hearth.

"Oh, it can't be my baby!" she faltered, pausing before dropping into a chair. But the tones were so changed, so different, so unlike the tired voice that first sounded from above, that my heart told me she had found her own.

"Look at him and see," I said quickly. "I found him — and there he is!"

Softly, as with the light touch of an angel, the young mother unwrapped the boy, removing one after another of the garments until the body was naked. She looked it over carefully; then wrapped it closely in her arms, kisses covering the warm, living flesh.

"Dear God! He — *is* mine! May I be forgiven for my lack of faith, Mother of Christ? Oh, he is mine, my baby — my little one — my own little lamb! But you are crying, Mademoiselle," she said, turning to me. "Why do you cry? I have my baby, and we are both so happy!"

"That you have him again makes me — oh —" It was all I could utter. I could only cover my face with my handkerchief.

"I can't cry now," said the mother. "But — but I have forgotten to ask you where you found him?"

"You have a brother?" I answered her question by asking.

"No, a brother-in-law. He, too, has suffered over the loss of my baby."

"It was he who took it from you," I replied hurriedly.

She pressed the babe to her, drawing her loose scarf about him until he was lost in the folds. Slowly she turned a pair of burning eyes upon me. "You are mistaken," said she.

"He is tall, dark, handsome, and speaks English fluently?"

"Yes."

"He is the brother of your dead husband?"

"Yes." She shivered as she answered, reluctantly, and her arms tightened.

"He would have been heir to a fortune left if it had not been for the arrival of your child?"

"Yes." The voice was a wail now; for she understood.

"His intentions were to keep it from you," I explained; "to rob it of its sight; and to make it a — beggar upon the streets of Paris."

"No! No! It cannot be! Casperone, tell me that it's not true!"

"What's not true, little sister?"

I rose to my feet; for in the doorway stood Count Larodi, his handsome eyes bent inquiringly upon me. As he looked, he paled, the veins standing out upon his forehead like cords. An expression of surprise and delight, mingled with incredulity, leaped out. It is strange how many times in the course of a few seconds emotion will change a human face. Casperone Larodi had recognized me instantly, and there must have been something about me that caused him to breathe desperately in an undertone:

"Phyllis, why are you here?"

"She has brought me back my baby!" gasped the mother. The scarf was lifted, and the naked, rosy child brought to view.

The sight of the babe and her words blanched the face of the man to his heavy jaws. He looked from the infant to his sister-in-law, and once more to me, and smiled skeptically.

"Monsieur will pardon me for speaking in English," I began, stepping forward; "but, as it is my mother tongue, I prefer it. I rescued the child from your friends on the Boulevard St. Michel and brought it back here. That was right, was it not?"

I remember how I delighted in my sarcasm. Could that girl talking have been timid Phyllis Fitzpatrick, who was afraid of her own shadow on dark nights and shrank from the evils of Paris boulevards?

The restless eyes of Count Larodi, wandering from me to the mother, blackened with rage. "Come, come, my good girl," he said harshly, "you're laboring under some delusion! Gertrude, don't let her palm off a child on you that must be an imposter."

I laughed hysterically, laughed until he strode forward and shook my arm.

"You little vixen! What are you trying to do?"

"To bring to justice the man who stole that child," I exclaimed, bending my head toward the crouching woman. "I heard you with your own lips tell the tale of the family skeleton. I heard you tell of your need of money, and of a girl you loved, and how sometime you would return for the baby after — after its eyes were destroyed."

Again he tried to take hold of my arm.

"Don't do that!" I cried sharply. "Don't do that! I can't forget how you gave the baby to the fat man, and after you had gone I watched him make ready to wreak your hellish will upon the child yonder."

"For the love of our merciful God!" cried the mother.

"Does that convince you," I demanded sharply of her, "or do you want further proof?"

The woman rose from her chair with a scream. Casperone realized that there was nothing more to hide, and that by some mysterious means I had found the child.

He came closer and addressed me derisively: "Then how came you in a house of ill repute, spying upon me? Is this the innocent *jeune fille*, the young girl who did not know anything?"

I shrank back, and he was quick to perceive his advantage.

"My God! You affected innocence well!"

My heart stopped and began again to beat violently.

"Phyllis," he went on in a whisper. "Phyllis! You cannot know how I have suffered without money. I loved you, and I love you still!" I felt his fingers crush my arm like a vice. "I could have made you love me with money! How came it that you were — there? You — you — in that house!"

I stood in silence, and then taunted, "I saw you when you came in with the baby and when you went over and looked out of the cracked window."

"It was a bestial, horrible place!" he muttered half dazedly, with a shudder.

At that instant the door opened. I shall never know whether the bell rang or not; but officers seemed to fill up every niche of the room. They thought, I suppose, that I was one of the household, and allowed me to pass out with the mother.

When we reached the hall, she whispered softly, "Go, please, go! It's too dreadful to think about. Hurry, before they detain you. They must not take him! He is my husband's brother."

I slipped into the Bois. My mind was in chaos. I could not afford to be brought into the limelight. I had restored the babe, and that was enough. I didn't care what they did with Casperone. But who had sent the police to the house, and on whose complaint had they arrested him?

In destroying him, have I sprung a mine beneath my own feet? In saving this baby, have I opened the door of destruction for myself? Casperone will stop at nothing, now that we are enemies.

If ever Roger should find out! The thought makes me shudder. But, of course, he can't find out — he is in New York, and New York is so far away!

CHAPTER IX

ZADIE listened stolidly to my story. I carried her along so rapidly that she held up her hand.

"I tell you firs' before you spik all, what I deed weez the ozzer *pauvre petite*, poor brat," she interrupted. "I took it to the Sisters of Mercy."

"Will they take good care of it?" I asked, a fullness in my throat making my voice husky.

"The best in the world."

When I described my last sight of the mother, as she swayed her way to the stairs, Zadie coughed. I saw tears glisten on her lashes, and heard her whisper:

"She must luf the leetle devil. The good God bless her! Now I tell you something, *bonne, très bonne*."

"What?"

"The man and woman haf gone with the police. I saw them go."

"Goodness! Tell me about it, Zadie, tell me!"

"The man you poured the aceed on, he nefer see again," cried she. "He were awful sight when they took heem out. Eet vas me sent the police to the house in the Bois. I was ver' frightened for you of the dark man. And you were such a *bébé*, you might get trouble weez heem."

Like the silly child, I began to cry. If only I had not been obliged to throw that acid! I ventured this thought tearfully; but Zadie turned roughly upon me.

"Let heem haf pain! How many babies you think ees beggars, blind beggars, through his devil'ry? You worry no more!"

. . . . . .

The papers were filled with the story. There was insistent clamor for a certain dark-haired girl, asserted to be pretty and very young, who had brought the child back to its home in the Bois. How so valuable a witness had slipped through the hands of the police, no one could tell.

However, I kept well out of sight, and wild horses could not have dragged my identity from the good hearted and impulsive Frenchwoman who went about her business in the boulevards as unconcerned as before the tragedy.

When I enter this house I look up through the mazes of stairs and wonder. I hardly know what I wonder. Often in my dreams I hear the cry of a hurt child, or feel the cold clutch of a rubber bandage strapped tightly about my head. Once, when sleeping, I dreamed that the fat man leaned over me, fastening his sightless eyes upon my face. I screamed and wakened, and for a long time lay shaking with fear.

. . . . . .

This afternoon loud talking in the hall awoke me. It seemed as though the corridors were crowded with people. In a nasal patois, Zadie's voice rose high above the others.

"I tell you all to go to the devil! She did not tell me who she was. I saw her once, and she never came again."

They were talking about me and those babies! The *gardiens de la paix* were seeking evidence against the man and woman lodged in the jail.

Then a quieter voice said, "We can do nothing, Madame, unless we find this young girl. You say that you only knew she brought you the children, and we know that she returned one of them to its mother. Now, this girl must be found!"

I raised my head so that I could hear better, and listened closely.

"The question is, Madame," went on the same voice,

"how that girl got into those rooms, and what she saw there. Her evidence is worth much to the state. We will pay you well if you can put us on her trail."

I could make out the words plainly. I knew what they wanted, and my eyes brimmed full as I thought of Zadie's stanch loyalty. How I love her — more than any woman living!

"I have told you a hundred times," she persisted in slangy French, "that I know nothing of the creature, and do not want to. She landed in my room with two brats, one so hurt and whining that it tore my heart to look at him. She left me that one and made off with the other. I haven't seen her since." And then she added very loudly, that I might hear, "And I hope to God that I will never see the likes of her again!"

Zadie said it as if she had meant it — but she didn't. God love her! Dear God, bless her every day!

"The man taken from here has lost his sight, and would not know her if we could produce her," the sergeant continued. "The woman in jail swears that she never saw her. The young mother has gone away, and the brother-in-law has been arrested upon your complaint. But that does not carry much weight without a witness. We can't do anything without the girl."

I thrust the end of the pillow into my mouth — I was safe! I couldn't have faced another difficulty; for, ever since coming to Paris, nothing but trouble had been my portion.

Casperone was in jail, then, until he could prove himself innocent. Zadie had saved me from the hated witness stand. There I should be obliged to tell my own name, and the American papers would copy it. I sat up in bed, bending nearer the door. In the corridor another man spoke with a rising inflection in his voice.

"I am sorry, Madame," said he, "but I am going to

serve you with a subpœna; for you, at any rate, must tell all you know."

There came the rustling of paper, and Captain Zadie uttered an oath.

"I'll be there," she replied slowly, "and I'll tell what I know; but it won't be much, and I shall still have the story that I know nothing of the girl and but little of how she came by the children."

I could scarcely contain myself until the men were gone. I slipped into Zadie's room, and found her poring over the document written in French.

"These damn writing ees like a hen scratch," she grumbled. "I soon as follow a chicken in the mud as read these scroll! *Mon Dieu!* it make my head ache!"

Not a word of complaint about the disagreeable affair into which I had dragged her! Her broad face turned toward me as I placed my hand upon her arm, and spoke of it.

"You need not care, *ma chérie*, you need not! I haf no fear. I ees only Captain Zadie, and if I wish — I say nothing."

Then for the first time in my life I kissed her. A swift glance of tenderness and gratified surprise lit up the uncouth face.

"You are the best woman in all the world!" I said solemnly. "I am going to tell you why I need your aid so badly. You remember I told you of the man in America and that as soon as my voice was trained and my education in Paris completed, I should return home?"

"*Oui, oui, oui!*"

"Well, if he knew! Oh, if he knew about me!"

"You mean about the babies?"

"No, not that! He would be glad they were saved. I mean about my life here in Paris. I could never look him in the face again."

"Of course not, of course not," interjected Zadie.

"Then you understand, don't you?" Here I stopped; for my selfishness appalled me. "Zadie," I exclaimed, "I can't let you go to the court. I won't let you bear the whole burden. I will take my share. I'll go now and declare myself the girl who found those children."

"*Pourquoi?*"

"Because I won't be a coward even for the love of one man — I won't! I'll go now, Dear, if you will go with me."

"You not do anything like that," replied Zadie. "You stay here until eet ees ofer. The brother won't tell your name — it's zee galleys for him. The one man ees blind,"— I shuddered at this,—"and the Frenchwoman not know you! *C'est bien!* Eet's gude." Zadie lifted her head and smiled as she added, "They not make me tell things when I know nothing, can they, *ma petite?*"

"No," I said doubtfully. "No; but it does seem so terrible."

"Bah! you let me mek it all right. You be glad the babies ees safe, and you not in the scrape; that you got me to keep you out of these things."

I was more thankful than I could tell. I rested limply in the armchair, happy that Zadie had a soul as big as the world — and that she had shielded me. The more I ponder upon her action, the more I love her. I am happier, too, when I think that one day, if I am able to help her, she shall cease to ply her hateful trade. I think, just then, as I searched her face, I regretted losing my money even more than ever before.

"Zadie," I questioned after awhile, "you know the man who took the baby from its home?"

"You mean Larodi?"

"Yes. His mother is one of the women to whom I brought a letter when I first came here; and, Zadie, if he

has asked me once to be his wife, he has asked me twenty times. I wonder how he could be so wicked?"

She didn't answer.

"Do you think there are many creatures in the world such as he? I wonder where he ever heard of that place upstairs?"

"I don't know," grunted Zadie. "Eet ees hard to say, when there ees so many devils going about."

"Do you really have to go to the court, Zadie?" I asked in a miserable tone. She nodded an assent. "Then you will see the Count. It makes me ill when I think that if circumstances had been different I might have married him."

"But you deedn't," replied philosophical Zadie.

"No, and if he goes away,— I mean if they put him in prison,— I sha'n't have to worry about him."

"They won't, unless they haf you to tell on him."

"They will never find me," I responded, shaking my head. "I have no wish to send him to prison or anywhere else."

"Then lie low — *comme chat noir* — like cats in Engleesh, eh? — and when eet ees ofer he won't bother you."

Oh, how I dread to have Zadie go to the court! It seems a wilful shirking of responsibility on my part. Yet, if I went openly, it would not help her and would make bad worse; for my life on Boulevard St. Michel is like a haunting specter already.

. . . . . .

This morning, anxious and frightened, I watched Zadie as she made preparations to go to the trial. I felt that she would never return, and that I was to blame for some great misfortune that had overtaken her. But she betrayed neither fear nor emotion, nor did she chide me in the least. The house was as silent as death when I took coffee with her in her room.

She was no sooner gone than I was possessed with a keen desire to follow her and witness Casperone's degradation. The thought impelled me to dress with feverish haste, and, although commonsense bade me stay quietly at home, some uncontrollable impulse forced my lagging footsteps in the direction of the court.

Entering the room, I slipped quietly into a seat and waited. Near the front, Zadie, passively indifferent, sat slouched in her chair. Casperone, accompanied by two men, entered directly after me by a door at the back; but before I could turn away he had recognized me. The glance was momentary, and, although his eyes flashed with resentment, he quickly passed on. Zadie saw me, too; but the heavy face betrayed no sign. I could imagine her thoughts as though she had cried them aloud.

"You silly leetle American fool, vhat for you here?"

Then I heard a door open and close, and knew by the shuffling of feet that it was Abbott. I dared not turn, fearing to see the ravages made by the acid. My reluctant gaze followed his bent figure when he had passed. One red hand was resting on the woman's arm, and the other hung limply at his side.

When the proceedings began, I breathed more freely; but I could not suppress my tears as the prosecutor questioned Zadie.

"Your name?" he demanded.

"Zadie Mullinaire."

It was the first time I had heard Zadie's family name.

"And you live in the house where the children were found?"

"Yes."

"And your business?"

Zadie hesitated a moment, and the blood rushed into her cheeks during the curt answer, "Cocotte."

"Did you see the girl who rescued the infants?"

"Yes."

"Have you seen her since?"

"No."

"Do you know any of the prisoners? Have you ever seen any of them?"

Zadie solemnly scrutinized the criminals and quietly answered, "No."

Just then I heard a commotion. Lady Jane took a seat, and for one instant a gleam of recognition flashed into her eyes as they rested upon Casperone. Then my two enemies in Paris knew each other!

Still, I have no fear of Lady Jane Grey. Our lives are as far apart as the antipodes; for I am begging on the boulevards for a brief time only. America is my home!

Zadie swore that she knew nothing more than she had already told, and was dismissed. The forcible evidence against the man and woman carried conviction, and they were heavily sentenced. For some unknown reason the woman took an oath that she had never seen Count Larodi. He walked free from the place with his head erect, flashing a glance at me as he went.

Zadie said afterward that she supposed the woman hoped to get help from the Count for herself and husband.

"Wasn't it awful in the courtroom, Dear?" I asked this, caressing Violetta, when Zadie and I were drinking our coffee.

"*Oui*, and I lied *deux fois!*"

"You lied twice! When?" I demanded.

"I say I deed not know you, and had never seen the Count before. I haf seen him go to Jeanne's room many times."

"Oh, then possibly he found that place upstairs through her."

"*Possiblement*," muttered Zadie darkly, and we lapsed into silence.

CHAPTER X

ON the third floor back a woman has moved in. Her name is Carlotta. She makes me shiver every time I pass her, and I find that she affects Zadie in the same way. Her dress sags in the back, and her skin is shrunken and seamed with fine wrinkles. Her bulging ox-like eyes seem as though they must fall out on her cheeks. She has a furtive way of glancing about that makes them look larger and darker — more terrible than the eyes of a monster driven along by his enemies. I notice that at night she keeps in the shadows as I do. I pass her often; but dare not speak. She has a young daughter, too, who is so very beautiful that I should like to talk to her. I wonder if she isn't a little afraid of her own mother? But Carlotta must be good; for she sent the girl away to school as long as she could get money to pay for her tuition — the *pâtisserie* woman told Zadie this.

. . . . . .

Yesterday just at sunset I talked to Carlotta's daughter. She is only fifteen. I met her on the stairs, and she smiled a greeting which I returned.

"Good afternoon," she said, and smiled again.

"You speak English!" I cried. She looked the essence of everything French.

"Yes, I was at school in England."

"Oh! Didn't you love it over there?"

"I like Paris best." An expression of sadness moistened her eyes as she spoke. "My mother is here," she explained tenderly.

How sweet her voice was when she spoke of her mother, — that large-eyed, withered looking woman!

"We live up there, my mother and I," she continued, with an upward toss of her head.

Then, girl-like, we looked each other from top to toe, and last of all gazed into each other's eyes.

"I know you do," I answered. "I have seen you often going for milk and to the *pâtisserie* for cake."

"Yes, my mother allows me all the cake I wish. She is such a good mother!"

Again there came the same sad expression, and before I could answer she exclaimed indignantly:

"People say that my mother is a wicked woman and that she does wrong things; but I know they lie about her. I watch her every day; but she doesn't know it. She does nothing but sleep all the day and all the night. I heard the *pâtisserie* woman say it was a shame for a woman like my mother to have such a nice child as I. I'd like to know if it's Mother's fault that she's ill and has to sleep so much, that her eyes are different from other women's, and that she hasn't money for clothes! She doesn't steal, and she doesn't drink — and how else could she be wicked?"

The color came and went under the lovely skin, and the delicate fingers clenched in excitement. She paused for breath, and for lack of something to say I kept my lips closed.

"She's the best woman in all the world," she asserted vehemently. "And I wouldn't go and leave her again for anything. I've been away from her too long as it is, and I won't go again, although I loved my school. I hate people who talk so about my poor little mother!"

"I'd hate them, too," I said slowly.

"I do! When I think what she's done for me, I won't let anyone tell me she isn't good and that I oughtn't to

be with her. My father has never taken care of her and me, and she's worked dreadfully hard until a year ago. Then somebody, an aunt, I think, left her a little money; so now she can sleep and doesn't need to sew." She thrust up a slender hand and wiped away two scalding tears. "Sewing is what injured her eyes. She needs a lot of rest, she's so thin and pale. But she couldn't do wrong things when she is so good and with me all the time."

"No," I replied bravely, "and she doesn't, I'm sure."

"Oh, thank you. I do like you for saying that! I am going to work as soon as I can get it, and I shall take my mother to the country. You see, I've been home only a little while — I didn't know about her."

These last words she said in French, and we were both startled by a husky voice:

"You didn't know what, Rosalie *mignonne?*"

"That you were ill, *ma mère.* I have been a wicked girl to stay away from you so long."

The ox-eyes turned upon me with a savage glare, and I shrank from a gaze that seemed to freeze me.

"Speak not with strangers, my little child," said the woman, and Rosalie answered:

"She's such a nice girl, Mother, and I'm so lonely!"

"Come with me!" ordered the mother, and I left them ascending the stairs together, their arms about each other's waists and the bright brown eyes of the girl bent upon the hollow, emaciated face of the cocotte.

A few hours later, just before I went out, I heard a knock at my door. Thinking it was Zadie, I called:

"*Entrez!*"

Slowly the door pushed open, and Carlotta appeared in the aperture. I stared at the white, drawn cheeks, the thin, blue, quivering lips, the haunting eyes reddened by weeping, and the whole wretchedness of her.

"You didn't tell her —" she began in French.

The words came haltingly, as if something had numbed her vocal cords. At first I didn't understand.

"You didn't tell the *mignonne* that I went out nights?"

I shook my head, and she went on.

"She mustn't know — she's too good. I feared you'd told her when I saw you talking this afternoon, and she thinks I sleep at home the night through. She's gone to bed now, my Rosalie, and I always go with her. I slip out afterward and leave her alone; but I'm back before she wakes. My baby, my baby! *Mon Dieu!* how I love her!"

Through the protruding eyes, I saw for one moment the soul beyond. Fear, passionate love, despair, and illness passed before me. I moved forward involuntarily and placed my hand upon her arm.

"I'll never tell her," I said; "but the *pâtisserie* woman has hinted to her that you are wrong in some way. Don't send her there any more."

Rage mottled the woman's faded cheek. "*Cochon — chamois* —"

"Stop!" I ordered. "Don't curse like that! Are you going to keep her here in this house?"

"I must: I haven't the money to send her away. Anyhow, she wouldn't go from me. You are young, Mademoiselle, to be on the boulevards." Carlotta turned squarely upon me.

"I'm almost eighteen," I said with a choke.

The girl sleeping in the bed upstairs was but a little younger than I. Awhile ago, the same as with her, Boulevard St. Michel and its nights were unknown to me. Again I put my hand upon Carlotta's arm.

"Send her away," I urged. "Send her away! If I had a mother to care for me, I shouldn't be here!"

I sat down and wept, feeling such an old, old woman in experience; homesick and suffering and my whole mis-

ery enhanced by the wretched spectacle of Rosalie's mother.

"*Pauvre enfant*, poor baby!" exclaimed Carlotta. "A woman's life! What is it? It's like — a brute's!"

"No, no, don't say that!" I gasped; for, with the words, my own future seemed to stretch over and over the windings of Boulevard St. Michel into a distant time that would bring me to withered cheeks and bulging eyes.

"I'll get money tonight," she went on, not heeding my appeal. "*Ma mignonne* shall go back to school before she finds out about me!"

With that she turned and went out, leaving me more disturbed and ill at ease than I had been for many a long day. Some feeling restrained me from telling Zadie about the girl and her mother. It would have been a breach of the small faith they had in me.

I followed Carlotta into the street and zigzagged my way toward St. Germain, faint-hearted and afraid. I envied the pretty schoolgirl with the cocotte mother. I wanted a mother, too, who would shield me from —

"*Donnez moi un cadeau!*" gasped I, at the instant I ran into a man who seemed to be in a hurry. He pushed me aside roughly, and I stood staring after him until he was lost in the crowd.

A stairway, dark and forbidding, yawned before me. I sank into it, huddled in the corner, sobbing until I feared attracting passers-by. The strange thing was that tears wouldn't come to my burning eyes. But I had to work: nothing else would bring me my daily bread.

I crawled out into the lighted boulevard, turning back toward the Panthéon, hoping to see Zadie. Near the tall building where the sacred bones of famous men repose, a woman stood under the light. She was looking down the street and evidently watching for somebody. I ventured nearer, and saw that it was Carlotta, her dress hanging in

rags behind her. She did not see me. Her interest was centered in a man coming toward her. The frail form straightened, and Carlotta placed her hand upon the lamp post as if to steady herself.

There she waited until the man came opposite her. They looked at each other a few seconds, neither speaking.

"Is she with you?" he asked at length.

"*Oui!*"

"How long has she been there?"

"Six days."

"You have dared to keep her six days in that place?"

"*Oui*, I want money to send her away. That's why I sent for you."

"I will come and get her," exclaimed the man. His expression hardened in determination under the light shining full upon his face.

"She won't go with you!" Her voice rose higher in the exultation of assurance. The ragged head of the cocotte thrust itself forward until the great, faded eyes were staring straight into his handsome face. She had spoken so rapidly that I could scarcely catch her meaning.

Carlotta's assertion aroused the man to action. He raised his hand and brought it down violently upon the upturned face. The woman sank under the blow for an instant; but she straightened herself and wailed.

"I said she wouldn't go with you! She's mine! She's mine!"

"She's mine, too, and I'll not let my daughter remain in that sink!"

"You have never cared to take her before."

"Because you kept her at school. The law will give her to me. You hear? I will take her away!"

Farther and farther into the shadows I crept. The frightened woman turned so quickly that the rags of her dress flapped against the lamp post, and as she passed me a

ray of light swept across her face, showing the marks left by the blow. She rushed away toward Boulevard St. Michel before the man could stop her. He stood looking after her until she was out of sight, then turned into the narrow street behind the Panthéon, and I saw him no more.

I did not mention what had passed to Zadie; for I am growing experienced in my little world.

. . . . . .

It must have been very early this morning, perhaps ten o'clock, when I heard a noise at my door. I sprang out of bed and opened it.

The girl, Rosalie, white and trembling, stood there. "Please! Let me come in, quick! They've come to take me away from my mother!"

I remembered what I had overheard in the shadow of the Panthéon, and quickly drew her into the room, closing the door and bolting it.

"Who is it?" I gasped weakly.

"Some agents have come with a man who says he is my father. I want to hide in here until they've gone. I won't go!"

Hardly had the words been whispered when there came a great knocking at the door. Placing my fingers on my lips, I pointed to the open space under the bed. Rosalie wriggled out of sight. In a sleepy voice, I asked what was wanted.

"*Ouvrez!*" was the command.

"*Pourquoi?*"

I slipped out of the *duvet* under which I had again crawled, opened the door, and peeped out. Two *sergeants de ville* were standing with the man I had seen strike Carlotta, and from behind them Carlotta herself peered at me, her sad eyes fixed entreatingly on mine.

"Is the girl here in this room?" asked the father.

"What girl?" I demanded, throwing the mother a

glance of assurance. "There is no girl here besides myself."

My denial did not hinder them from entering and plying me with questions. During this catechism one of the officers opened my wardrobe and ran his hands about among my gowns. The other passed into my sitting-room. Returning from an unsuccessful search, his eye caught sight of Rosalie under my bed. Walking to it, he drew it from the wall and forcibly lifted the girl to her feet. Her face was scarlet.

"*Vasche* — miserable *vasche!*" cried the father, taking the girl by the arm, and turning upon me. "You women are all alike — liars — thieves — and worse!"

"I want to stay with my mother!" wailed Rosalie. "I love her — she is a good mother!"

"She's a bad mother," answered the man. "I'm your father. I take you because the law gives me the right. Your mother is—"

"No, no!" gasped Carlotta. "Take her; but don't say that! Don't — don't!"

"Don't say what?" cried the girl. "I will know! Am I a baby that I can't hear the secrets of my father and mother? I will know!"

It was then that I realized what the world and the law gave to the man. The mother who had taken care of and shielded her child since birth, who had given the girl her life, was forced to part from her in the hour of great need.

Bewildered by the frantic cries of Carlotta and the boisterous commands of her father that she should go with him, Rosalie was led away with but one pitiful embrace from her mother.

Carlotta stayed with me, whimpering and sobbing, until Zadie came in and brought us coffee.

. . . . . .

I haven't written for a long time. I hate men — no, I don't hate Roger; but, then, he is a good man. I wonder if there are a lot of good women? I don't suppose there are many without money. I have begun to believe that money is the greatest protector of virtue in the world; that if a woman with money isn't good, she must be bad to the very core.

Yesterday when we were having breakfast, Zadie said, "She ees ver' ill."

"Who?" I asked.

"Carlotta, up there, Rosalie's mother."

I remembered then that I had not seen Carlotta for some days.

"I take up soup," said Zadie. "Come!"

Awestricken and afraid, I followed her up the winding stairs to the third floor. We walked in without knocking.

There was scarcely anything in the room save a rickety table, a chair, a broom, and the bed on which the sick woman was stretched. She opened her eyes when Zadie and I entered; but closed them instantly, and I marveled at the white lids with their thin, discolored veins, straining to cover the rolling eyes. Only two glassy slits were left uncovered under the dark lashes. The foul odor of the room sickened me, and I turned toward the window.

"She ees to have air," Zadie said softly, noticing my movement; then added in French, "She'll die like this!"

This aroused the woman out of her stupor, and she lifted her head slightly. "No, no, I won't die! I won't! I'm cold, that's all."

The scene impressed me so deeply that every word she uttered was written indelibly upon my memory.

"Take this soup," ordered Zadie. "Have you had a priest?"

The woman shook her head. "Priests are not for our sort," she replied, gulping down the liquid. "I'm not

going to die — I'm like this often. I'm cold, too. I want to see my baby!" She lapsed into a stupor again.

Zadie went close to the bed and felt of the scanty covering. "You haf two blankets," she said to me. "Will you gif her that boat rug you haf, that blue one?"

"Of course!" I cried, and straightway ran to get it.

When we came back from our night's work, we went to Carlotta's room. With flashing, feverish eyes, she was curled up under my warm blue blanket, gibbering in delirium.

. . . . . .

I think constantly, as I write, of the sick woman in the room above. I have tried to help her all I could. She is getting better, although she will never be quite well. She has tuberculosis, Zadie says, and can't afford even the little delicacies to ease her suffering.

After all, money seems the only savior in the world. If Carlotta had had money, she would have kept her child. If I had money, I shouldn't be here. Money would allow Zadie to carry out the instincts of her human soul. I could go through the whole world and prove that the lack of money causes sin and death everywhere; for, no matter what our aims in life may be, no matter what our principles are, the main thing is just to live, the one, all-absorbing instinct in human nature. Lack bread, and principles vanish!

CHAPTER XI

BUT of all the money I begged I haven't a sou left. Captain Zadie calls me a "brick"; but I call myself a fool. Burning candles for money,— for my career, and for Roger,— then giving it deliberately away, permits me to call myself whatever I wish.

It is such a chilly afternoon, and the thought of home — of him — makes me shiver! Zadie says that the Americans are a cold-blooded race. Perhaps they are; but, if so, I love them, all the same.

I had been to see Marquise again about lessons; for I had saved just enough money to begin on, and when I had counted it out I had never been quite so happy in all my life. In former days this sum had been a trifle. Now it stretched back into long weeks of misery and degradation; it illuminated every day in the future until the hour I should see America. I have written to the man not to bring the piano. The hour for my lesson is passed, and I am sitting in these two cold rooms overlooking the front yard of this house. A slight wind is stirring the dead plants in the wooden framework near the fence. The sun is forcing a lancelike gleam through the upper part of the window. I can hardly bring myself to record my foolishness; but I want to remember the emotions that prompted me to the act.

That night Boulevard St. Michel was cold, and a drizzling rain prevented me from staying too much in the open street. I seldom plied my *Donnez moi un cadeau* in the lighted cafés; but Café D'Harcourt enticed me in.

Slowly opening the door, I encountered many eyes directed toward me. On taking a seat near the wall, the waiter asked my desire. I said:

"Vichy, *s'il vous plaît.*"

A smile curled under the garçon's slight mustache; but he went to fill my order, and for many minutes I kept my eyes down. Near one o'clock the café filled with a rowdy gang, gathered to sing midnight songs.

At one table a sweet-faced girl sat sharing the chairs of two of her countrymen, a cigarette giving out little circles of blue smoke from between her curved lips. Once in awhile the man at her right took several puffs directly after her, smiling into her eyes and delicately closing his mouth, as if to impart some mysterious secret. The six men at the same table listened with laughing faces to the stream of French that slipped from her tongue. To my left, almost at my elbow, sat a long-haired individual, his red locks savoring of brilliantine and bleach. His appearance, and the wild, rapid way that he wrote on a pad, made me think him a poet. He must have been jotting down a sonnet, or possibly some verses he had just conceived. His strange expression bespoke insanity; but, then, I have heard that all geniuses are half mad.

When a loitering fellow would ask to sit beside me, I would say in English:

"I do not speak French."

And generally he would shrug his shoulders and move on; for there were too many women in the Boulevard St. Michel haunts to bother with one who couldn't understand. So, hour after hour passed, and still I didn't have the courage to go into the rain.

Once or twice Zadie walked through the café and smiled. Lady Jane also looked in at the door, her long blue raincloak showing off the black of her eyes and the auburn

touch in her hair. She, too, saw me, and a sarcastic look swept over her face.

Three people had taken an empty table at my right,—a Frenchman with a countrywoman, and a girl about twelve.

The poet scribbled on my left. I was weary with looking at his red head; so I turned my attention to the new arrivals. The girl's small face was beautiful, but tired looking. Excessive weeping had reddened her lovely eyes, and creased the delicate skin. She was sitting between the man and woman, who were talking in low, rapid French. The girl didn't seem to understand; for she paid no attention to the conversation, her abstracted expression seeming to indicate that her mind had left the Café D'Harcourt and was far away. I wondered where. She didn't look like a French girl. I surmised that she was either from England or from America. Then my deduction proved to be correct; for the man bent over the pretty head and said in English:

"Smile, pig, if you want to sleep tonight!"

A wan, tired, rather sly smile broke over the pitiful, babyish mouth. "I was thinking of America, Carlos," she said.

If I had stepped on an electric wire I could not have been more startled, and the thought shot into mind that the girl was being detained against her will. My involuntary ejaculation disturbed the man and woman; but I pretended that something had happened to my shoe, and when the fellow spoke again I raised my head to listen.

"Think no more of that country, Mademoiselle Nan," he said, "or I lash you with stout whips. You stay here in gay Paris and get much money."

"I don't want money — I want to — go home!"

The man thrust his hand under the table, and with his thumb and forefinger nipped the girl's tender flesh near

the knee, twisting and turning it until the child, without opening her lips, sank back dead-white on the plush cushion.

I was the only one save the red-haired poet who had seen the act. He smiled evilly — the sight had given him new inspiration. Once more he began to write rapidly. The child smothered the moans that would rise again and again, and for several minutes pressed her palms against her lips. Suddenly the Frenchman rose with a bland smile to greet a newcomer. The girl glanced up shudderingly. Her flowerlike face had lost none of its pallor: rather had the deathly hue increased, as she took in the appearance of the man.

"Monsieur, Monsieur!" cried Carlos. "We feared you were not coming."

The man whom Carlos addressed was blear-eyed with age, and his hand trembled as it rested on his stick.

"Is this the girl you were telling me about?" he asked, looking at the child.

"Yes. Is she not beautiful?"

"*Mais oui;* but pale and *très jeune* — very, very young."

"No, no; she is only frightened. If I believe my eyes, Monsieur will soon cure the jade of that."

"*Oui, oui, oui,* leave that to me! Is she ready to go now?"

"If Monsieur has the money with him."

"Plenty of that," was the reply. "Can you make the girl understand that she is to go with me?"

Little Nan sat up straighter when Carlos said, "This gentleman is going to take you to his home."

"I don't want to go with him! I had rather stay here!"

"With me?" asked Carlos incredulously.

"Yes — yes! Please!"

"If you do not go with him," threatened Carlos, "I

shall — kill you — in the worst way I know! Don't I always keep my word, Nan?"

She nodded an answer, saying, "But I am afraid — so afraid!"

"It was stupid to arrange a meeting in a public place like this," objected the purchaser. "Tell her I will give her bonbons — liqueur chocolates — what she likes."

"He will give you bonbons," wheedled Carlos.

"I don't want anything like that. I want to go home to America." She began to whimper and to speak rapidly in English to the woman. "I want to stay tonight with you, Nicole," she pleaded. "If you will only help me to get back to America to my father and mother! They will send you the money when they can. Oh, I want to die or go home to my mother!"

She raised her last words to a shrill cry, and both men got to their feet. The waiter demanded the cause of the disturbance.

"She is wicked," Carlos explained. "Her mother, there, can do nothing with her. She is bad!"

"Whip the pig, then!" growled the waiter. "It's easy to train her with a strap."

Hysterical little cries for aid came from the girl's lips. The scene had attracted the entire café. Men and women, from idle curiosity, pressed forward to watch.

The man, sinking his villainous fingers deep into the tender arms, tried to push Nan through the crowd toward the door. He twisted the small girl completely round, and her eyes, wide with fright, looked directly into mine. I smiled a broad, encouraging smile, and rose to my feet also.

"Stop!" I cried impulsively. "How dare you treat — my sister so? Poor little sister, poor little Nan! I have found you at last!"

I pushed through the crowd and placed my hands on the

fingers of the man, who only clung tighter to his possession. The bright mind of the child opened to my scheme almost before I reasoned it out myself.

I leaned over and whispered hurriedly in her ear. "My name is Christobel McCall. Don't forget!"

"Oh, my sister, I want to go with my sister!" she cried.

Help had come to her, and with renewed courage she wrenched herself away. The English was being rapidly translated to those who did not understand. The interest deepened; for this man was talking to the crowd in French. Some were satisfied that he spoke the truth, others anxious to hear more. By this time I had my arm about the frightened girl.

"You shall go with me to America, Dear, to our father," I assured her. "Don't cry, precious, pretty little sister!"

The head waiter came up to us after a heated talk with the Frenchman, and looked questioningly at little Nan a moment, and then asked her, "What is your sister's name, little girl?"

"Christobel," screamed Nan.

Eying me knowingly, with an impudent smile, he demanded, "Let me see your license, Mademoiselle. You see I know you."

I drew the paper Zadie had obtained for me from my purse, and he read aloud:

"Christobel McCall," and he looked doubtfully at Carlos.

Nan clasped my fingers more tightly. "I'm not their child," she cried. "This is my sister! I will go with her! I will! I will!"

"I demand that you return me that girl!" ordered Carlos slowly, his brow lowering. "I shall have the officers after you."

I dragged the child to the red plush seat, and mounted it, not forgetting to pull her up beside me. With my

arm still about her, I cried out over the heads of the crowd:

"This is my sister, and if you molest her or me I shall report it tomorrow to our American consul. I demand that we be allowed to go free! Say something!" I begged in a lower tone. "Say that you want to go with me!"

The high, sweet voice raised in a plea. "She is my sister! That man and woman are not my father and mother; for I don't know one word of their language."

A man, speaking in English, inquired, "How came you with these people, then?"

She lifted her eyes to mine with subtle meaning. "I came here to find my sister, and they took me."

"And I have been searching for you, Darling, ever since I knew you had left home," I took up abruptly. "So, you see," I added to the crowd, "if we are not allowed to leave here, something will happen to this café."

"Let 'em go!" shouted a coarse voice in English, and another in French took up the cry. The mass of people parted, and with Nan's hand in mine we marched out into the rain.

She slept with me that night, and we did not awaken until late next day. I didn't tell her where she was. I explained that I was a student — which was true; for can any girl ever learn more of the lessons of life and despair than have I?

She told me that Nicole and Carlos had brought her from America by force. Nicole advertised for help. Little Nan had answered. When next she remembered, she was aboard ship bound for France.

After *déjeuner* I counted out my money grimly, and, taking the girl by the hand, started for the boulevard. I looked down into the pretty face, and found her eyes questioningly upon me.

"I wish you were my sister! I haven't any," she said, and then she suddenly asked, "Where are we going?"

"I'm going to send you back to America to your mother."

I began to run, fearing that I might change my mind, nor did I stop until I had placed Nan and the money into the hands of the steamship agent.

She kissed me, and whispered, "My father and mother are poor. We will send back the money — sometime!"

I kissed her with filling throat and, giving her my own name and my banker's address, left her — and by now she is journeying to her father and mother.

. . . . . .

Boulevard St. Michel is worse than ever! I skulk along the side streets in the shadows of the buildings to save myself from being stared at. Then, when I see an unobservant man, one who is not looking about for someone, I pounce upon him with a rapid "*Donnez moi un cadeau,*" and many times I go away with a sou.

What a lot I have learned! Never to ask anything of a man alert and searching; for he always places caressing fingers on my arm and says, "*Ma petite chérie.*"

When this happens, I simply say haughtily, "I do not understand you," and go on.

CHAPTER XII

WHEN I told Zadie what I had done with my money, she was so silent that I feared she would burst out with a reproach, and tell me that I had been "a leetle American fool."

"I had to give her the money," I sobbed. "Her people are awfully poor. I simply had to — she was such a baby!"

Zadie folded me tenderly in her arms. "Poor *petite*, you ees a brick! Poor little dear!" Zadie whispered over and over.

She seemed to be thinking deeply for a few seconds, and I was too tired to talk. Little Nan had exhausted my resources, and all I could see was endless nights stretching before me in sordid, dreary succession in the lighted boulevards.

"*Chérie*, would *ma petite* like to go to the country with me, to visit *ma mère?*" Zadie asked me abruptly.

"What?" I demanded, thinking I had not properly understood her mixture of French and English.

"You see," she explained, "I have been safing to go to my home. Next week is *ma mère's* birthday. I always go then."

"But I haven't any money, Zadie," I answered drearily. "I can't let you pay my expenses."

"Silly leetle *bébé*, ees you going to quarrel weez Zadie ofer a few francs, when you haf just give your money to the wee girl? If you not come, I ees disappointed. You come, eh?"

"Oh, Zadie!" I cried, and while I hesitated to find words of gratitude she continued:

"Eet ees not beautiful as summer; but the air ees fresh, and eet will be *bonne* for you, and we will —" She waited so long that I grasped her hand and added a thought of my own.

"We will forget just what we are," I cried joyously.

"*Oui, oui, oui,* that day we will be milliners. *Ma mère* thinks I make hats. You will luf her." Her voice was tremulous with tenderness.

"When are we going, Zadie?" In my delight, I caught up Violetta and squeezed the little dog until she yelped. "Oh, won't it be lovely to forget Paris? I want to be where the grass grows."

"Eet ees winter," Zadie put in; "but there ees fine air —"

"And the absence of smells," I supplemented.

"*Oui,* Deary, *oui,* and to forget for one whole day!"

"Oh, Zadie, I can think of nothing so heavenly as to go to the country. I shall enjoy even the ride in the train. Where does your mother live?"

"She lifs weez my sister near Epernon. I will write that we will come next Wednesday. I write now."

And write she did there and then, bending industriously over the table, and punctuating every word with laborious grunts.

So the letter has been sent, and I am to go on Wednesday with Zadie to Epernon. What bliss!

I wonder if it is possible for one to forget Paris for a whole day?

. . . . . .

Lady Jane Grey and Zadie have gone to bed. Against the light streak of day broadening behind the Panthéon, I can see little birds darting in and out of the crevices in the tower; but I can't sleep until I have written the account

of the happiest days I've had since I have been in Paris.

Zadie and I got up very early in the morning, and went to the station in a bus. Zadie bought the tickets. We made a little compact not to speak once of St. Michel. We were just two milliners from the great city of Paris, going on a country excursion. I wished that one of my hats could have been used for Zadie, because she didn't look very much like a maker of hats in the one she wore. It was in the style of two years ago, much too small for the large face, and the color didn't blend nicely with her red hair. Zadie explained this by telling me that every year she dyed her hair a different shade with peroxid and henna, and the year that the hat was bought the dye happened to be light. However, I did improve it a little by putting a bit of brown silk under the rim, so as to separate the green from the vivid, dark red pin-curls. I should have lent her one of my own hats, had they not all been too youthful for her.

From station to station, to keep us from talking about forbidden subjects, we joked about our hat making. Zadie boasted of our fictitious orders until a quiet little woman who sat in the corner must have thought we were prosperous milliners at least. But I could not help noticing that she kept gazing at Zadie's hat with a puzzled expression in her eyes.

We began to count the stations, and Zadie's dear face beamed with happiness as the miles grew less. It was really nice to be milliners and not — cocottes.

Epernon at last,— with old, old houses spreading over a little hill, broken here and there by spires of ancient churches and the whitewashed walls of convents! We quickly stepped out on the platform, and Zadie rushed forward.

"There ees Balandrot! He ees my sister's husband. And there ees their donkey, Fifi!"

I had never heard Zadie rattle on so in my life; but the same happy spirit possessed me. I fell in love with Fifi and Fifi's master instantly. Balandrot was leaning out of the back of the small donkey cart, his long legs touching the ground. His face was almost covered with dark, shining hair. A peasant shirt of indigo blue fell to his knees, while a pair of steady black eyes watched every person alighting from the train. He didn't notice us at first; but smiled at Zadie as he saw her running toward him, and, still holding the reins, stepped to the ground.

"The mother feared you might not come," he said in patois. "She's been sitting in the window since the rising of the sun."

Zadie coughed, but didn't answer, and I noticed the nervous movement with which she stepped into the donkey cart after me. We rolled up a narrow street, Fifi making a horrible snorting noise which sounded more like the weird screech of a bird than the heehaw of a donkey.

From the houses and small shops, tousled-headed children tumbled out at the sound of the braying, and little girls, carrying tots almost as big as themselves, shouted after us. Onward through the town we went at a good pace, until Fifi slowed up when the cart turned into a narrow, uneven track at the edge of a forest. Long before we reached it, I heard the murmur of a stream swollen by rain. I had almost forgotten how country trees looked, and how the grass, which here was not entirely dead, lifted each blade separate and apart. The little birds swept across the sky in black swarms. I had forgotten about them, too. Although France is so different from America, it almost seemed that the elms were American elms, and that if we went far enough the white road would lead us to Boston; but Zadie's gabbling to her brother-in-law in French and the loud heehawing of the donkey evidenced Epernon, and not a New England highway. I was con-

tent to sit silently and drink in the sweet pure air of the country.

"Balandrot lives far out," said Zadie to me in English.

I think she wanted to awe the big peasant by speaking in another language than his own. He dropped his jaw, and looked at her in amazement. Zadie, with a satisfied grunt, unpinned her hat, and rode the rest of the way bareheaded.

"I luf to feel the wind on my face," she continued in my tongue, lifting her chin to meet the keen air, and giving a sidelong glance at Balandrot. He was making Fifi bray by scraping at her tail with his whipstock.

"Mademoiselle is an American?" he asked presently, looking at me.

I nodded my head in answer to his question. Balandrot had a good face, one that a woman could trust.

"She makes hats with me," Zadie explained. "She put this bit of brown under there."

There was a touch of pride in her voice, and I made up my mind that I would soon manufacture her a really pretty hat from some of the rumpled finery at the bottom of my trunk, and that it should blend better with the red hair than the one she so proudly displayed.

Balandrot looked his appreciation of my efforts, and, scanning the sky, remarked, "The birds fly low, then high. It is going to rain. Is Mademoiselle afraid of a storm?"

"No," I replied; "not if I am with you and Zadie."

We were soon climbing a little hill on top of which were several cement-walled houses, whose sloping roofs were overgrown with ivy.

"That is ours," ejaculated Balandrot, pointing his whip toward a tiny homestead shining white in the sun.

Zadie wildly waved her hand. "See! My mother!"

I looked, and saw huddled in the window a tiny, shriveled form, a wrinkled face out of which shone two black

eyes. A white cap with lacy ruffles almost covered the gray hair. A small, brown hand shook back a welcome to Zadie, and two sunken lips, like blue lines, drew back in a smile over toothless gums. She was still in the window-seat when we entered the room, joy broadening the smile on the withered old face.

"Ah, little mother!" cried Zadie. "See, I have brought you another milliner, a friend of mine. Come to me, my love!"

The tiny mite in the window raised two shriveled arms, and Zadie gathered her paralyzed mother to her breast. Then she sat down in a chair near the stove.

"She wouldn't let us move her away from the window," Balandrot's wife said, "not for a minute since early this morning. I know she is frozen."

"The mother is cold?" asked Zadie, fondling her.

"No, I was waiting for you, my baby."

One old hand was smoothing the straggling locks that hung over Zadie's mottled face, while with the other *la petite mère* patted her daughter's shoulder.

"My *bébé*, my *bébé!*" she repeated.

That Zadie was her baby seemed ridiculous. I felt a queer sensation in my throat.

"She can't walk now," explained Zadie's sister; "so she stays a great deal in bed, and we put hot bricks about her this cold weather. We let her sit up a bit in the afternoon; but she simply wouldn't stay in bed when she heard you were coming."

"I like hot bricks," burst from the lisping blue lips.

"The little mother shall have all she wants," smiled Zadie.

The two shining eyes turned upon me. I was bending over a basin of water under the looking-glass.

"Is that the girl who lives with you, Zadie?"

"Yes," replied Zadie.

"She's pretty, too. She looks like I did when I was young."

"She always theenks that everybody who ees here looks like she deed," Zadie explained to me, and then she added in French, "Little mother, Zadie has brought you some sweets."

I love the French peasants! Now I understand where Zadie got her big, simple nature, and human understanding.

Gabrielle, Balandrot's wife, prepared a nice *déjeuner*, and we sat down happily together.

There was a small, shy girl, little Gabrielle, who came to breakfast with the news that farther out in the country there was going to be a dance that night. Zadie gave the child a kiss, and looked at me over her head. I had the same thought in my mind.

"Would you like to stay, Pheelis?" she asked, and then turned to her brother-in-law. "Balandrot, won't you and Gabrielle take us over?"

"And leave me with Granny?" pouted the child.

"But with lots of sweeties," whispered Zadie in her ear.

"And there are Granny's bricks to be kept hot," cried the mother.

"And the doll baby to be looked after," inserted Balandrot, placing a slice of brown bread on the child's plate.

The cloud lifted from the little one's face, and after breakfast we went together, the little girl and I, to see the chickens. I forgot as I raced in the long road, scattering the meal for the poultry, and tumbling the dogs and the half-grown pups, that I had ever seen Boulevard St. Michel.

Then came the dance. We left a huge log to smolder on the hearth, when Granny and the little Gabrielle went to bed. Zadie had given each a bag of sweets which she had saved for the purpose. I heard the *petite mère* suck-

ing loudly on a piece of her taffy, running it slowly over her uneven gums, while little Gabrielle munched the hard bonbon with her strong young teeth.

Balandrot brought out the braying Fifi, and we started merrily, the wind blowing strongly through the naked trees that bordered the stream. I had never thought the sky so beautiful before, possibly because in the boulevards of Paris one is not thinking of it, and rarely looks upward.

As we jogged along, the brother-in-law told Zadie a lot of the neighborhood gossip,— how that Mère Fragnard was dead, and Monsieur le Curé had been ill with la grippe; how that pretty daughter of Bastien Durand had come back from Paris with a dot, and had married her sweetheart.

"Ah! Paris is the place to make money, without doubt!" and Balandrot nodded his head sagely.

The dance was in an old farmhouse with broken windows. Tallow candles gave the only illumination. A dear, old, long-haired man scraped music from his fiddle. I've been to lots of dances in America; but none like that, — none half so delightful. There were a number of blue-shirted peasants, and they looked quite handsome in their holiday clothes.

It was fun to watch them dance. I write "watch them" as if I hadn't danced too; but I did. And a nice boy said pretty things in guttural patois in a low, nasal tone. He stood first on one foot, then on the other, and smiled with friendly dark eyes into mine. One horny hand fussed embarrassedly with the tail of his blue shirt, and ran along the edge of it, drawing it close about him as he talked. With his other hand he plucked timidly at the sleeve of my blouse. The old windy house was cold; so I gladly accepted his offer to dance, and it made the blood in my veins tingle sharply. He tramped on my feet, and my half-frozen toes sang with pain; but I was too happy

to care. I was a milliner — in truth! Hadn't I sewed the bit of brown in the rim of Zadie's hat?

I chattered away to him brokenly in his tongue, and smiled at the hot flush that rose to his temples in his effort to understand me; but when he replied in a flood of French I had to implore him to speak more slowly.

Zadie stood talking to Balandrot in one corner away from the holes in the window; while Gabrielle was held close by a smiling peasant who swung the little woman round in the intricate figures of a country dance, her wooden shoes clattering loudly in her brave attempt to keep up with him.

"What's Mademoiselle's name?" my swain asked presently.

"Phyllis," I answered. "What's yours?"

He reddened as I threw the question back. "Pierre — that's not so pretty as Phyllis. I think you are the nicest girl I ever met. I didn't know that Americans were like you. I thought they always had big teeth and funny hair."

We stopped for an instant near the north window through which the wind came in chilly gusts. Fifi's voice rasped from the donkey-shed, and it seemed as if a friend were calling to me from the darkness.

Before Pierre could further express his admiration, a big peasant swung me from my feet and swept me to the other end of the room. The dance went on again, and I smiled at Zadie and Balandrot, huddled in the corner.

"Ees you happy, leetle Pheelis?" Zadie threw at me, and I had time to reply:

"Happier than I have ever been before."

I've wondered since what made me so ridiculously lighthearted at that dance. I think, perhaps, because I loved to be with good people who had homes, and babies, and grandmothers — although little Gabrielle's grandmother didn't put me at all in mind of my own.

"Come and eat!" was the cry, when the square dance

was finished. How good the wine and black bread tasted after the violent exercise!

During our drive home, Zadie smiled grimly at my lightheartedness; but she only said, "Child, I believe you were born a peasant, and a companion to Fifi."

Just as if Fifi thought so, too, she lifted her tail in the wind and gave a great, rough snort, kicked out her heels, and galloped down the hill. This caused Gabrielle almost to tumble from the cart, and Balandrot laughed sleepily as he drew his pretty peasant wife under his arm. Soon, above the rattle of the wheels and the roar of the wind, I heard her breathing evenly in sleep, while her husband yawned audibly. Even Zadie's head drooped. I didn't want to sleep — I was afraid I should wake up and find myself in — Paris.

CHAPTER XIII

ZADIE handed me a theater advertisement. "I beleef they take you," said she. "Of course, they take you! Look at your figure, and you get ten francs a night. That ees better than walking the boulevard."

"I wonder what they'd ask me to do?" I replied, after a moment's thought. "A theater — why, I know nothing about acting."

"They not ask you to act," said Zadie rudely. "They not need actresses in the ballet."

"What do they need?" I asked.

"Preety shoulders, a sweet girl, a leetle American girl, to show her to the public night after night until their money box ees full. That ees what they want."

Zadie laughed grimly, and I shivered as she emitted the sound. It was more like the rasp of a file, like the croak of a raven after the fall of night. Zadie knows more of the world just as it is than I do.

I trembled at the mention of the theater; but to escape walking the dark streets meant much to me — and money was coming in so slowly! I had had a taste of being without warmth, without food. I couldn't afford to throw away a chance of getting legitimate work.

"Get up early and apply for eet," advised Zadie. "If you succeed, you get your singing back."

The idea hovered about me the entire night. As soon as the first street cries began, having slept only four hours, I rose and dressed, and, placing in my purse the address Zadie had given me, hurried to the underground railway.

After a few stations I got out, and at last, by dint of asking questions, found myself before a hallway in front of which stretched a line of girls like a queue outside the pit of a theater.

I took my place in the chattering bevy, and waited eagerly for the opening of the door. Each girl was young and shapely, and my heart sank a little as I contrasted my chances with theirs; but I assumed a determined air that I was far from feeling.

Standing there, I thought of the robe I should wear on the stage, and heard the imaginary swish of silk as my long train swept the stage floor. My imagination portrayed my triumph vividly. Possibly, after a long time, I could learn to act.

From time to time other girls joined us. After a wait of several hours, the door opened and the mass of girls rushed in. A man stopped them with a forbidding French exclamation. I did not pause at his order; but broke from the line and stood panting before him.

"I am here," I said slowly, in English.

"I see," he replied with a curious smile on his lips that suggested — I know not what. "Take a chair," he continued, and obediently I dropped into the seat.

He did not take me into the little room at once; but I was one of the five selected by him to wait for audience. The rest of the human herd was turned growlingly away.

I sidled into the private room, in answer to a call from a beckoning finger, and a large, florid-complexioned man looked me over from head to foot.

"Take off your clothes," said he.

"What?"

"Take off your clothes!"

"She's an American girl," put in the man I had accosted.

"Don't care if she's an angel from Heaven. She can't

pose in this theater without our knowing what kind of figure she's got!"

I went home, smarting under a new experience, my body tingling from its recent exposure. They had accepted me, and that night I was to pose on the top of the most famous ballet in Paris.

Zadie listened to my impassioned tale.

"I feel as if I couldn't go!" I groaned.

"You will, though. You must! Eet will get you from the streets. Eet ees the way to your studies, you know."

"But I have to pose with so little clothing on!" I complained. "I don't like it."

"You like *Donnez moi un cadeau* better?" she asked roughly.

Her words stung me. "No, no!" said I bitterly. "Even that theater is better than Boulevard St. Michel."

My legs could scarcely carry me to the rehearsal that afternoon; but I realized that it was the lesser of two evils that lay before me.

With puckered brow I watched each girl do her part. Then came my pose. Cowering in my scanty drapery of gauze and silver tinsel, I was hoisted high up on the pulleys at the back of the stage, rearing my arms out in Delsartian angles after the fashion of a statue. In the pit the managers whispered their endless instructions to the conductor, and I could also see the moving bodies of the cleaners.

"Raise your arms higher!" commanded the Englishman.

I stretched them up toward the gilded ceiling.

"Now turn your eyes directly toward me. There! That's your pose! Always with your gaze upon the front row. Will you remember that?"

"Yes," I replied, slipping to the stage, where I stood in my bare feet, waiting for my shoes and stockings.

"Go now and get something to eat, and come back at nine o'clock. You are not wanted until the final act."

I recounted my afternoon's doings to Zadie.

"They told you, some of the men, that you ver' preety?" she asked.

"No; but I heard the Englishman tell the Frenchman that they had a drawing card in me."

"How much money?" demanded Zadie.

"Ten francs a night," I said. "That's two dollars in 'American money."

"It keeps you from the street," commented Zadie.

"Yes, and that means something. Let me see — two dollars. I ought to save out of that, oughtn't I?"

"*Oui, oui, oui!* You ees careful."

"Then, oh, Zadie, I shall be able to study with Marquise, after all."

. . . . . .

I stood tremblingly before the mirror waiting the call to come and perch myself above the bevy of ballet girls.

"Your eyes on the front row," the manager whispered to me as I went upward at the back, "and your arms high and fingers extended."

The curtain rolled up slowly. At first, the row of lights at the foot of the stage dazzled me. Never shall I forget the beating of my heart, nor the dizziness that made my head swim round and round. The wall of dim faces caught my eye as I settled my gaze upon the front stalls and forced a smile to my lips. Then, slowly, a vision formed itself out of the sea of heads beneath me. One face, darkly handsome and wholly American, was turned up toward mine. Had my excited imagination created a wraith of Roger Everard? His hands were hanging to

the sides of the chair, while the men near him applauded tumultuously.

"*La petite fille!*" surged up from the crowd; but I saw only the one face, the face of which I had dreamed, waking and sleeping. Was I rearing the vision in my brain, or was it Roger Everard in flesh? Sickened and ashamed, I felt my body tremble and shake with sudden terror. My flesh froze, and the muscles in my arms refused to do their work.

I heard the manager below whisper frantically, "Throw those arms farther out!" but I had no power to obey him. The ghost in the front stall kept me spellbound.

Slowly I turned my eyes to the man on his right. He sat there in splendid relief against the row of cheering men, and I traced every feature on his face,— strong-jawed and noble! From a pair of brilliant eyes he shot me a golden gleam, which touched my soul with its truth. Lower and lower swung my arms, until my half-naked body succumbed to the force in my brain and I tumbled down, a limp mass behind the scenes.

My eyes opened when water was sprinkled into my face. From the front came the sharp demand for the reappearance of "*La petite fille.*"

"There, there, you're all right!" cried the manager. "Come, come, climb! Quicker, quicker! Throw out your arms and smile. Blake, hang onto her, or she'll fall again."

This time I looked off into the dark corners of the theater, swaying and smiling, with freezing body and tortured soul — for ten francs.

I went no more to the theater. My refusal to go puzzled Zadie; but she didn't chide me. Afterward I went sneaking like a wicked night-bird back into the boulevards.

. . . . . .

Zadie and I have had many discussions lately about morals and religion. At heart, she is really a Catholic. I like to hear her argue religion between the puffs of her cigarette. She says that papal Rome is holding to the ancient tradition that this state should pay the expenses of the church, while France demands that all religious institutions should be independent of the state. The two — the Mother Church who has nurtured her children since the infancy of modern civilization, and the rebellious daughter clamoring for the freedom she holds so dear — have come to fisticuffs. Zadie says that any time now the soldiers are apt to be ordered out to suppress dangerous riots.

. . . . . .

I have persuaded myself that I didn't see Roger that night in the theater. I am sure he's in America. Another proof is that the big man I thought was with him had golden eyes, and that's not natural. I must have been excited and overwrought.

I burned a candle today that Roger would not forget me, and another that soon — oh, very soon! — I shall be able to leave Boulevard St. Michel, and — *Donnez moi un cadeau.*

CHAPTER XIV

THE soldiers have come at last and have turned the city into a huge barracks. Today, red groups arranged themselves from St. Germain to Pont Neuf watching the people who had gathered together to discuss the orders issued by the court of France, that the church taxes should be paid immediately or the altar trimmings would be confiscated. The dignified cuirassiers, with fine uniforms and their bobbing horse-tail helmets, rode up and down the boulevards. They clattered back and forth over the bridges, until the very air seemed to be filled with their presence.

This afternoon I walked toward the Panthéon and sat down on the broad steps to watch the fast moving crowds in the boulevard below. A straggling woman here and there broke away and skulked into the shadows.

Presently I went back to St. Michel and turned toward the river. The soldiers spoke to me as I passed, some softly, some in loud, laughing tones, until my face burned crimson. One man placed his hand affectionately upon my arm; but I drew aside and told him that I was not French. I walked away with his laugh echoing behind me.

Nearing the Place St. Michel, I saw rows of omnibuses awaiting their turns to roll back to the Odéon. I struggled past the soldiers to the bridge; but feared to mention to any my need of money, for the brows of most of them were too lowering. The silent mobs, too, told of a terrible undercurrent.

At Place St. Michel the thought came into my mind that as I dared not beg I would cross the bridge and go into

the Paris I had known in better days, passing just once from Boulevard St. Michel into the brightness of English Paris. So I turned toward the Louvre, crossed the bridge, and walked up the Avenue de l'Opéra.

A multitude of people pressed through the boulevard. On each side of the avenue soldiers lounged, talking and telling stories. Beautiful women smiled upon them; but, receiving no encouragement, passed into Des Italiens and the Montmartre, some following the mob to Place de la Madeleine.

Looming against the bright sky was the historic church, closed and silent. Morbid looking priests crept from boulevard to boulevard, receiving the jeers of the ribald without a murmur. In their eyes dwelt the hidden determination that had made the Church of Rome the most powerful organization on earth. I neared the Madeleine and waited. Soldiers guarded the front and side gates; although many loitered about, for the confiscating order had not yet been put into execution. Those on guard were doing their duty with perfunctory solemnity that men assume when they don their nation's garb of authority.

Suddenly a great crowd came running from the Rue des Capucines. In an instant every conceivable spot in the Place de la Madeleine was filled with people. They were pushing toward the church with jeers of laughter and cries of "Down with the Church!"

The church was ringed in by the scarlet of the solemn soldiers whose faces were drawn into tense lines that ran from their high cheekbones to the lower angles of their jaws. The determined brilliance of their eyes beneath the cockade hats plainly demonstrated that they, at any rate, recognized a vested power mightier than that of the clamoring mob.

Out of the Rue des Capucines, the Rue de la Paix, and the Boulevard des Italiens, armies of soldiers hastened to

the scene of the riot. I shrank into the shelter of the building on the corner, and watched the venting of fanatical human passion. It required no great deductive power to conclude that if by any chance a priest or a layman should attempt to force his way to the church gates, he would be spitted upon one of those upraised glittering bayonets.

I noted that a young priest, with flowing black robes and bared head, stood with lifted pantomimic arms, directly in front of the red-coated soldiers, and the masses of people made a circle for him. I moved forward breathlessly as he began to speak. His face was set and pale. Within his fanatical soul lay a spirit of vast intellectuality; yet I knew that the great soul was diseased, and ready to throw away its human life for a demanding conscience.

Here and there other priests scuttled through the place and disappeared into the masses; but the young priest talked on.

"It's the church of my God," I, pressing still closer, heard him say, "the home of the Queen of Heaven and of her Christ Child. I will protect her from your wanton swords — the taint of Sodom's fleshpots!"

His voice rang out, sure-toned and strong, and an eager, excited throng of people pushed forward. The priest's words were taken up as they fell and passed backward from mouth to mouth. I elbowed myself into the front row, wriggling nearer to catch every word.

"Stand back!" the gendarme ordered the insistent priest. "Stand back! It's sure death to pass!"

"Death? Do I fear death?" And the deep voice lifted the words and threw them into the soldier's face. "It's a small thing to give one's life for the Mother Church today — and always. I will go through and defend her altars! I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house

of my Lord than stand with all the world's riches in my hand."

I peered into his face, and an expression indomitable as death swept over it. He thrust forth his big, dark head, and ran toward the line of gendarmes. With sudden decision, the soldier in front of him lowered his bayonet, and the heavy, black-robed figure ran directly upon it.

The glittering blade disappeared as it swerved through the priest's body, and a tiny bright point gleamed out through the long soutane at the back. The powerful head lifted into the air as the body writhed and turned like a gallant hound transfixed on the antlers of a stag at bay. Wonderful deep-set eyes raised upward in dying agony toward the stone church and leveled their exalted gaze at the sculptured figure at the top. For one instant the long arms extended themselves high in the air.

"*Ave Maria!*" gurgled the twitching mouth, just as crimson death bubbles gathered large upon the open lips and burst into prismatic coloring in the sun. A soul, large, sensitive, and anxious, fought for a moment with brawn and brain, then gathered itself for flight, and was gone as the soldier drew out his bloody bayonet.

For an instant I bent low and looked into the glazing, unconscious eyes. But as I drew back from the priest's side the mob burst into a huge roar that echoed and re-ëchoed against the stone church like the laughter of devils. It was just then that there came a blinding flash and a thunderous cannonade, and the next thing I remember I was crushed against a stone wall — the moans of a human voice sounding in my ears.

CHAPTER XV

THE shock had been so great that I was unable to remember immediately what had happened. Then I saw a maddened crowd hurrying into the boulevards away from Place de la Madeleine. At first, my eyes were better than my ears; for the groans, which were really near me, seemed miles away. Here and there people were hastily picking themselves up from the earth — and none was dead but the black figure near the motionless row of soldiers.

As my ears gathered power to hear better, I realized that the groaning sound came directly from my right. A boy of perhaps twenty years or so, holding his hands frantically to his face, lay close to the small tables of the corner café, where he had been thrown by the explosion.

I crawled over to him and touched his shoulder. "Are you hurt?" I whispered; for as yet my voice was not strong.

And to my surprise he answered in English, "Oh, I believe my eyes are out. I am sure I've lost my sight. I can't see, and they hurt me so!"

"Hush! Don't cry like that," I cautioned. "You'll attract the police. You don't want them to take you away, do you? Sit up!"

The boy rolled over and raised himself to a sitting position. I, too, sat up and loosened his hands from his face.

"Let me see!"

"What was that flash?" he breathed. "It seemed as though it was sent straight into my face. A dark man stood beside me, and we were watching that priest. When

the soldier thrust his sword forward, the man close to me muttered something in Italian, and then came that roar. Great God! I am blinded for life!"

"Hold your head still, while I look at your eyes!"

His fair English face was slightly burned in patches from the powder; but the wide, sightless blue eyes seemed to be untouched.

"They're not burned," I said. "Can you walk?"

"Yes; but where shall I go?" he groaned. "My friends won't be home, and I don't dare ask an officer. What shall I do? Blind — in the name of God!"

"Stand on your feet," said I, "and hold tight to my hand."

I aided him to get up as best I could. With one hand he steadied himself by placing it on one of the small metal tables, and with the other he held frantically to mine.

It had all happened in such a brief time that the soldiery had not gathered their wits together.

"Will you come to my home until you can decide what to do?" I ventured. "Come! the soldiers are moving! Come, come!"

"Arrest the leaders!" cried a strong voice, and the line broke up as the redcoats scattered into the crowd.

"Walk as if you could see," I whispered, and then, staggering into the Boulevard des Capucines, I led the boy through Rue Scribe to the corner, and turning to the left struck off toward the river. We went on unmolested, I leading, but pretending to follow; and the boy, with a strong pretense of seeing, held his head high. Through some of the quieter streets we walked slowly.

"Hear that mob on the avenue?" he exclaimed shudderingly. "What a confounded row! Are they coming this way?"

"No," said I. "I believe they are going off toward the Notre Dame."

Until we crossed the bridge and came close to Rue de Bac, we said no more. I expected every moment that my companion would tell me that he was regaining his sight; but his nerves still kept up the tiny, individual flutter that I could feel plainly through his coat sleeve.

"Where do you live," he demanded, "and where are we now? It seems as though we had walked for miles."

"We've come some distance," I explained; "but I dared not take you through the Avenue de l'Opéra,— it's full of soldiers,— and there's no hope for a fiacre, you see?"

"Yes, yes," he answered with effort. "I beg your pardon for speaking like that. But you see my nerves are pretty rotten, and my eyes burn like fire."

"Hot water will ease the pain," I replied. "We won't go into St. Michel by the river *rue*. There are too many soldiers there."

We threaded narrow streets for over a mile, and then, turning, came directly into the glare of Boulevard St. Michel. Here and there I recognized a woman I knew. In the near distance I saw Lady Jane Grey; but I hoped she had not seen me, and hurried the boy on.

When we reached the house I said in a low voice, "Lift your feet. We're going upstairs."

We entered without making a sound, and I closed the door carefully because I did not want Captain Zadie to hear me if she should happen to be at home.

"Sit there," I said in low tones, "and don't make a noise, if you can help it. Now that you are here, I can bathe your eyes, and I am sure you will be able to use them in a few minutes."

"Oh, do you think so? I say, I don't know how to thank you. It's awfully decent of you. I only hope that I shall be able to return your kindness some day. I feel such a precious fool at this minute! I can't even think."

"Don't try," I soothed. "I'm going to put hot water

on your eyes, and then when the city is quieter you can go home."

During this conversation I had poured water into a small tin kettle and had placed it on the stove.

"What's the matter with my hair?" broke in the boy suddenly.

I went to him, and lifted the light locks from his forehead. These were untouched; but something had passed over the top of his head and singed off the curls as sharply as if a pair of scissors had cut them.

"There's nothing much the matter with it," I answered reluctantly. "You've lost your cap; but your head is not bleeding. There are a few cuts on your face; but when I wash them they won't look half bad."

"But it's my eyes. I don't believe I shall ever see again. Oh, damn —" His voice broke, and a despairing cry broke from him in spite of himself.

"Hush!" I implored. "Hush!"

Before I could say more I heard a door open and close, and a heavy footstep nearing my room. Rap! rap! rap! I leaned over, placed my fingers on the boy's lips, and waited breathlessly. The knocking began again, and this time it was louder and more importunate. Zadie's voice cried out commandingly:

"*Ouvrez!* Pheelis, open the door. I know you ees there!"

I hesitated; then turned the key in the lock and stood in the doorway. I scarcely recognized the usually calm woman in the frenzied creature before me. She pushed me aside and stepped in.

"So Lady Jane has not lie! She say you bring man in here. I not believe it. Thees ees not *Donnez moi un cadeau!*"

She looked straight and fixedly at me, and the boy rose to his feet.

"This isn't what?" he whispered. "This isn't what?"

"Eet ees no place for you, you wretched boy. *Allez-vous!* Geet out!"

She could not drag her accusing gaze from my face. I bounded forward and grasped her hands.

"Zadie, for God's love, listen! He is blind, and I brought him here to help him!"

She turned slowly and looked at the trembling youth. He was feeling his way to the door with upturned face, chalk-white and drawn with pain.

"I'll go," said he. "I didn't understand."

A peculiar sound came from Zadie's lips. I noticed that she was staring at him, a tragic expression settling about her mouth.

"You might have told me!" the boy cried sharply. "You might have told me! Where are you, Girl?"

"I'm here," I cried, springing toward him. "I'm sorry. It's the only home I have."

I spoke angrily to Zadie; but she didn't heed me any more than if I had not been there. She touched the boy's arm with infinite tenderness.

"How came you in Paree?" she breathed. "And where you lif?"

The water was boiling, and I interposed, "Put this on his face, Zadie. He was hurt in the riot."

My anger had died. Zadie had come in with the determination to save me from myself; but, seeing her mistake, was eager to aid the poor, helpless boy. For the next half-hour we relieved him as much as possible; but he did not speak again, keeping the cloth held tight to his eyes.

"You haf not tell me your name," Zadie said presently.

"No," replied the boy slowly. "It was because I didn't think. My name is Max Donnithorne!"

His blind eyes were directed upon Zadie. I stood so

close to her that when she swayed before him I caught her by the arm.

"Zadie!" I cried. "Zadie!"

She brushed me aside impetuously, and the boy made a movement to depart.

"You not go alone," Zadie said bruskly, and I scarcely recognized her voice. "I find you *voiture*. The pain ees better?"

"Yes. Please let me go now. I can't stay here! There's something awful in this place!"

I made no effort to detain him, and Zadie led him out. I could hear her talking to him as they walked down the long flight of stairs. When I peeped from the window, I saw her place him tenderly in a cab, and as it rolled away she ran into the center of the boulevard and watched it until it was out of sight. Then she disappeared swiftly into the doorway, and, without pausing to speak to me, rushed into her own rooms and locked the door.

It took fully five minutes of entreaty and pounding before she opened it. Her face was blistered and red. Her eyes at the corners were wrinkled deeply, and the coarse red hair was tumbled and awry.

"Zadie!" I exclaimed, throwing my arms about her. "Don't cry! Why should you let a boy like that disturb your feelings? His eyes will come out all right."

She seated herself again, and with a sob began fumbling at the front of her dress. "Look!" she screamed. "Look! Eet ees he! The Engleesh child! *Mon Dieu!* I ees hees mother! See hees father! How like! How like!"

I bent over and looked at the pictured face. The miniature was of a boy of perhaps twenty years, with the same wide-open, laughing eyes as the other boy might have had before the accident. A mass of curls was piled high on a finely shaped head, and the firm chin and mouth

were the counterpart of those belonging to the youth just departed.

Shocked, I answered, "The boy who was here is your —"

"Engleesh son," Zadie gasped. "Oh, Pheelis! How I vant to see him one more time!"

We did not speak for another hour; but I held the huge red head in my arms and wiped the swollen eyes — and neither of us went into the boulevard that night.

RIERE
CAFE

[redacted]

CHAPTER XVI

IT was eight o'clock this evening when, feeling it imperative that I should beg even on a rainy night, I took my umbrella, lifted my skirts, and sallied forth. Since the night of little Nan's rescue I had not been in the Café D'Harcourt; but the warmth, the lights, and a desire to get out of the rain lured me in that direction. As I walked along I lowered my umbrella because it accidentally bumped into another. The rapid walk of the man indicated a set purpose.

"*Donnez moi un cadeau,*" chanted I in an undertone. The words froze on my lips.

"I'm sorry," said a familiar voice. "I didn't mean to run over you. You spoke to me?"

"No," I replied in English, "I didn't speak. I'm sorry —"

The next moment Roger Everard was looking intently, curiously, into my eyes. My legs doubled suddenly and almost refused to hold me up.

"Phyllis Fitzpatrick! How strange to meet you! Come in here for a moment and let us talk. We'll get some coffee."

He was leading me toward the Café D'Harcourt.

"Not there, not there!" I said nervously. "Don't let's go into that place."

I was afraid of being seen with him in any one of my nightly haunts; but he did not perceive my agitation. The rain still pattered; but to me the night was radiant with brightness and Paris was again a beautiful city. What a change a few moments had wrought! I was too excited for speech, and seated my-

self with a happy sigh in a small café on Boulevard St. Germain.

"Who would have thought that I should meet you in Paris?" ejaculated Roger. "Yes, of course, I knew you were here studying. Doesn't this seem cheerful?"

Cheerful! If he only knew! How many times I had longed to see him! How many times I had drawn him before my vision!

"What are you doing here?" I queried, hoping that he would not ask me too many questions.

"I am here studying art, and attending a few lectures in the Sorbonne University. Getting a general knowledge of French. How do you like Paris?"

"I love it," I said quickly, and at that moment I did love it; for was he not with me, and I with him? His presence had changed all the outside murkiness.

"I like it, too. I've done a lot of work here. I haven't seen you since that dinner at the Waldorf. Do you remember?"

"Yes, indeed. But I heard you were studying in New York."

He meditated before answering. "I was in New York; but decided to come over and see what Parisian art could do for me. But tell me what you're doing," he commanded smilingly.

I drew my wet boots under my skirts, and — and told him a lie. Oh, the remorse I've suffered over that untruth! I hate lies — how I hate them! I said I was studying singing, and that I loved my work, and that at some remote period, when Paris could do no more for me, I hoped to return to America, an artist. When I had finished, my head dropped in confusion, and in silence I contented myself with furtive glances at the grave, earnest face so full of purpose.

"Why, that is simply delightful!" he broke out. "My

mother and I are here for a year, and we can all have such good times together. It brings back old days to see you. I think," he mused, "I remember hearing that you suffered in that bank smash in which poor Coster figured."

"Not to any terrifying extent," I assured him. "I had drawn a great deal of money before the failure, and had transferred it to a bank in Paris."

In comparison with his honest geniality, my deception made me crimson with shame. I tremblingly resolved that he should never know of the dismal role poverty had thrust upon me. I met his eyes in bitterness of spirit. I had not dreamed they were half so beautiful as they really were,— I mentally likened their color to the blue of the sky, the purple of the sea at the dying of the sun.

"Good!" he said. "I was afraid that you had had it all in the trust company at the time. Now I want to know where you are living. In a pension? In rooms? Or where? You must be awfully lonely without any of your friends here. I'll come and look you up tomorrow; but I can't accompany you home just yet. I have to go to the American Club. Wouldn't you like to come with me?"

I went unhesitatingly, although *Donnez moi un cadeau* rang like a prison knell in my ears.

"Isn't it strange?" he said, as he walked rapidly through the rain. "I thought when we collided that you were a French girl, and that you said something to me."

"No," I dissented slowly. "I didn't speak to you in French."

Two lies! I'd rather almost die than be untruthful to him. In misery, I walked beside him, and it seemed that beckoning specters crowded upon me from all sides. The Boulevard St. Michel called me. *Donnez moi* shrieked from every dark corner.

We took the bus a short distance down the avenue.

Upon our arrival at the club, Roger ushered me into a small room where a young man sat idly running over the keys of a piano.

"Mr. Griegson," said Roger, "this is Miss Fitzpatrick from America. She's an old friend of mine, and I came upon her tonight quite by accident. I haven't asked her, but I believe that she will sing for us sometime."

Boulevard St. Michel! Boulevard St. Michel! *Donnez moi un cadeau!* What shall I do when he asks me to sing? Why, sing, of course, and sing, and sing, until I feel as if I were living again.

But I dared not then remain with him; for he had proposed going home with me later. So, while he was occupied with his duties I left a note with Mr. Griegson saying that I could not wait, for I had an appointment with a girl friend. I asked him also to meet me tomorrow in the Place St. Michel near the Seine, adding a postscript that if he were unable to come I should be there at the same place and hour the next day, or even the day after that.

Oh, if I could have left Roger tonight without once having said *Donnez moi un cadeau!*

. . . . . .

I'm ready for bed now, and as soon as I open my eyes I shall go to the church and burn candles. Afterward I'll go to the Louvre to see the picture of the Christ there. It is a famous picture, Zadie says, and that when one first glances at it, it looks as though the face were dead; but, after studying it awhile, the eyes seem to open, and the divine countenance lights up with a benediction.

Oh, I want to be what Roger thinks I am! But how can I? I must live, I must eat, and my only resource is the boulevards. I desire to be good, too. Only a short time since, I should have died rather than knowingly sin. If it be a sin to beg for bread, then I have sinned indeed!

It is so much harder to die for lack of bread than for principle's sake! Hunger is death to life — and moral sensibilities.

Zadie shrugs her shoulders when I discuss the problems of life with her, and grimly remarks, "The world owes you a lifing, and you get eet the best you can. Luf everybody, be good to everybody, and what more the good Christ want, eh?"

. . . . . .

Three wonderful things have happened today! I wish to record them that I may read them over at some future time when I have grown old, and my existence in Paris is far in the past. Then I may be able to live again the great happiness that has come to me even here — in Boulevard St. Michel!

After drinking my coffee, I sat down to mend the braid torn from my dark walking skirt. I had made up my mind to go first to Notre Dame to burn candles, then to the Louvre to see the picture of Christ, and this blessed afternoon to keep my rendezvous with Roger.

These three pilgrimages of mine are curiously symbolical of the three great powers in a girl's life,— for a woman's delight in living lies in the possession of her faith, art, and love. I have learned that when one falls in love religion becomes a waking cry in the heart, and that everything beautiful, sensuously speaking, increases the new and vivifying life of the emotions. Only last night, before going to sleep, I read over some beautiful poetry. These same verses a short time ago, when the shadows of the boulevards were in my eyes, seemed empty and futile.

Varied thoughts of my future occupied my mind as I sewed industriously; but footsteps in the hall outside, and a rap on Lady Jane's door, dispelled my contemplative mood.

The low, deep voice of Jane's American brought me slowly to my feet. The skirt slipped to the floor, the needle becoming lost in the folds of the cloth. I listened intently, and my face grew cold; then the blood rushed hot to my eyes. I heard the voice that had thrilled me for weeks. The man whom I had desired to see, he who had been constantly in Lady Jane's room, was — Roger Everard!

I felt an inexplicable sudden change. My lips whitened and became hard under a feeling I had never known. Every vestige of the girl I was the minute before disappeared in the desperate faintness that swept over me as I strained my ears to hear the voice, pleading for the life and honor of a French cocotte. Lady Jane was better than I; for she had but followed the custom of her country, walking in the same path with her sister women, whose lives had been unfortunately cast. But with me —

I crouched down on the skirt in terror — listening — listening to the tones I had grown to love by instinct and yet had not before recognized as Roger's. I was too excited to understand the meaning of his words: it was enough to know that he was with Lady Jane — enough to realize that he sought her welfare.

Yesterday there was but the thought that I loved him; today there was the desire to have him for my own. Lady Jane was a lost woman in the eyes of Roger Everard; but as far as he knew I was as innocent as the angels in Heaven.

I sprang to my feet, strangling a cry, and stood in indecision. A maddening thought overpowered me: he might sometime know that I had been sneaking through the shadows of darkest Paris begging bits of money from her darkest sons.

I would drag him back to America, and the sights of Paris would be lost with the memories of Boulevard St. Michel.

I crawled softly toward the double doors that separated my rooms from Jane's. Through the crack down the center I could see them plainly.

I noticed that Roger had not taken off his overcoat nor unfastened the wrap about his strong throat. Lady Jane was crouching on the hearth-rug like a fawning tigress, her naked neck gleaming white against the bright-hued dressing gown. Her hair, one brilliant mass, fell about her piquant face, and the witchery of her eyes was veiled by her heavy lids. I drew my breath in an admiring gasp. How could any earthly man resist loving such a beautiful creature? Then her long lashes lifted slowly upward.

"Tell me in your *joli* Engleesh, slow," she lisped in stammering English. "I understand. I like talk your — your Engleesh."

"I'm afraid you won't understand, Jane," answered Roger. "You don't know how differently we think about women in our country. I have told you that our men don't believe the same as yours do here."

By the expression of her eyes I knew that she did understand. She smiled and dragged closer to him.

"You be Frenchman then, you be Frenchman!"

I shivered. I realized now why those two women on the boulevard had fought like two lionesses. It was over just such a man as this. I felt that I could fight with Jane if she tried to keep Roger from me. I couldn't stop to argue with my better self. The storm of jealousy, of physical hatred, raged through my senses until I couldn't reason. I stretched out flat on the floor, my feet on the unmended skirt and my eyes glued to the crack between the two doors.

"Jane, I will never come here after today!"

She understood this also; for she looked at Roger with half closed eyes, her teeth gleaming through her red lips.

How sensuous she looked, how like some beautiful, wild creature of the forest! Then she flung her arms about his knees, clung to him, beseeching him not to go, and imploring him in a flow of broken English and French love words to remain always with her. He struggled to free himself; but she rose panting to her feet and flung both arms round his neck.

"For God's sake, Jane, don't look at me like that!" stammered Roger. "No — no! Don't put your arms about my neck! My God! My God!"

Her tightly closed arms drew his head down to hers, and his voice died away, smothered under her kisses. For an instant I was impelled to thrust myself through the doors and tear him from her. A great thought flashed into my brain, and I stifled a cry of gladness. He would be mine; for I was unlike Jane in spite of my mingling with the nighthawks of Paris.

By main strength Roger forced her back, stood up, and tightened his fur collar with a desperate jerk.

"Jane, listen to me! Will you hear me? I can do you no good. I've honestly tried. You would drag me down to the level of the men you know. Men in our country make only good women their wives and the mothers of their children. Jane, I will not come here again!"

She made no answer; but daggered him with her eyes. Turning abruptly, she flung herself in a fury on the divan. Roger looked hesitatingly at her, and made as if to open the door. Then he walked back slowly toward her and bending down touched her shoulder.

"Jane!" he said brokenly. "Get up, Jane!"

Her eyes darkened with resentment, and she motioned him away. "Go!" she spat up at him. "*Vas!*"

"Can't you see, Jane," he urged, keeping his hand upon her arm, "that it's your soul I want, and not your body?"

"My soul!" she screamed, springing up. "My soul! Vhat good ees that to you? Eet's my body I vant you to take! My soul may go where it will. My soul! My soul! Pah! You think I can haf a soul? Souls are for the reech — reech women can have such things. Soft beds, food, luf! Those are for women *you* like!"

Roger said something inaudible to me, and she ceased instantly. He straightened up, and threw his head beyond reach of the grasping fingers of the cocotte. The lines of the beautiful young form under the dressing robe showed plainly as her body twisted and turned. Instantly her mood changed and she cooed to him in soft, liquid French.

Roger wheeled away from her. "Jane! Jane, you forget! I've told you that I do not love you."

She shuddered and breathed seductively. "Come weez me! Come weez me!"

"No, Jane, listen! I love another woman — one I've known a long time. I will not see you again. I can do you no good, and you must let me go!"

I rolled away from the door, picked up my skirt, and stitched on with conflicting thoughts.

In another instant I heard Roger's footsteps on the hall floor and a subdued whimper in Lady Jane's room. I must plan quickly to leave Boulevard St. Michel, and in a way that Roger should never know that I had been tainted with it.

After a time I heard Lady Jane rush through the hall and down the stairs.

. . . . . .

Later I went to Notre Dame to offer up prayers for my beloved. A year ago I should have called burning candles to strengthen my petitions a superstition; but now I take infinite comfort in this act of devotion.

Only one woman was kneeling at the altar railing. Her

face was lowered over her slender gloved hands that slipped easily over the rosary. Silently I knelt beside her, and began my prayer.

Although the whispered prayers fell smoothly from her lips, my neighbor, ill at ease, shifted her position. Suddenly, as though impelled, she raised her eyes, and they met mine. I was gazing directly into the face of — Lady Jane Grey! She ceased praying, and so did I. Stealthily, she edged a little nearer, her eyes drawn down at the corners, and her mouth pursed, childlike. Lady Jane had come to pray for Roger Everard, and so had I!

Dropping her eyes, she murmured again. Long and earnestly she sent out a rhythmical prayer. She paid out another franc for candles, filled up some empty sockets, and knelt once more. I did the same, only adding a sou. Then I knelt beside her. I heard her breath hiss through her teeth. She opened her eyes, and, allowing them to rest upon me, said wickedly in a vicious undertone:

"Pig — *chamois* — twice pig!"

She had learned her country's unclean words in English, and her pronunciation was perfect. I do not think she had any idea that I knew her American; but she realized that I was different — different as men count difference in women, and that my nationality and the proximity of my dwelling to hers menaced her happiness.

Presently, after I had finished, I hastened out of the church, and walked rapidly toward the Louvre. At the entrance of the building a man called me by name. I turned quickly and halted; for Casperone Larodi stood looking at me. His face was pale, drawn, and thin; but his eyes expressed surprise and pleasure. A weak smile twitched his lips.

"At last I have found you!" said he.

"Please don't speak to me!" I replied, horrified at the sight of him.

"Don't be cruel, Phyllis. Don't! You know how I love you. Oh, what I have gone through on your account — it was all for you! I have longed to meet you, yet dreaded it."

"I'm going into the Louvre," I answered, breaking in upon his words without ceremony. "I do not wish to be bothered just now."

With a completeness worthy of him, he ignored my sarcastic statement. "May I go into the Louvre with you?" he asked.

I nodded my head.

"I want to see the reproduction of a beautiful picture of the Savior in which the eyes open and close," I remarked, purchasing a catalogue. "I don't know the name of the master."

Casperone was scanning me curiously. "You're so changed, Phyllis — so different! When you first came to Paris you loved nothing but your art; but now — the thought that you could be in that house has made me suffer more than I've imagined it possible for a man to suffer. What are you doing nowadays?"

"I do not see how my movements can interest you," I answered coldly.

Through the long halls we walked in silence. Directly at the end of a narrow gallery I saw the picture I was seeking. It was hung beside a Madonna from whose lap the Holy Child lifted tiny, dimpled hands. It seemed impossible that the happy Babe and the Man of Sorrows could represent one and the same person. As I looked I saw the man was dead — with hanging head and lowered eyelids. Weary lines furrowed the flesh from brow to lips. Under my steady gaze the prominent whiskered chin seemed to quiver, so dainty had been the brush touches upon it. Suddenly the closed eyes flashed open. A smile gathered slowly about the drawn mouth, the suffering lips

appeared to part, and, still searching the divine portrait, I caught my breath and sank upon a bench.

"You are ill, Phyllis!" gasped Casperone.

"Hush!" I breathed. "Hush!"

In benediction the Savior had smiled upon me. Surely he could not close those brilliant eyes again! I pushed Casperone's hand from my arm, my glance leaving the pictured face. When I looked once more, the lids had fallen. It was to me as though the light of the sun had been extinguished.

"We will go and look at Venus of Milo," I said, rising to my feet, "and afterward come back here."

Sitting on a bench before the mutilated beauty, Casperone said, "You are poor now, Phyllis. I won't question what you have done; but you must come to me. I love you — you know how I love you!"

My thoughts went to Roger. I was poor no more, now that I had seen him.

"Won't you let me help you, Phyllis? You will, won't you?" Larodi continued. "I have a beautiful little apartment where you can live. You shall have your music. You shall have all that I can give you."

I did not attempt to explain how I was living; but merely answered him with a touch of irony in my voice, "If I am with you, who will pay for my luxuries?"

"I will! It's a pleasure for a man to provide for a woman when he loves her."

"But a wife must pay a husband's bills — is that it?"

"That's quite another thing, quite another thing! A man doesn't always love his wife; but he can't but desire to make a comfortable home for the woman he adores."

"As a wife," I broke in with sarcasm, "I should have been quite an invaluable prize if I had retained my money! Shouldn't I?"

"A man must marry to perpetuate his name, and to

make a home into which to receive his friends," he said irritably, "and if he is a poor devil like myself he's got to marry a rich woman. But with you, Phyllis, I could be so happy!"

"Don't touch me, Casperone!" I cried, drawing away. "I told you that I could never care for you! It seems to me that you are saturated with children's blood."

"*Mon Dieu!* Can't you forget that? Can't you forgive? Don't you know that it was for you, Dear, that I wanted to be rich? You could make me a better man, Phyllis. You would bring Heaven into my life. Ah! to have you in my arms — to know that you were mine!"

"Have you ever thought that the woman you may love may need something besides luxuries?" I demanded. "I mean the woman you can't marry. How is she going to have a home for her friends, and live up to the nature within her?"

"You wouldn't need those things. You would be loved by me — that's enough!"

He snatched my hand. I could have struck him in the face for his presumption; but cunningly I restrained my anger, already having decided how to escape from Casperone. In situations like this I had been taught by the boulevards to be wary of people of his caliber.

"Listen to me, Phyllis! I must have money to keep up the name my father has left me. But you are the only woman that can influence my life in any way."

"Let us go back to the picture of the Christ," I said determinedly, "and don't speak of this again."

We stood once more before the famous painting.

"His eyes are closed now," I said miserably.

At that moment I longed to have the brilliant smile repeated, which had for one moment beamed upon me.

"If the eyes ever open, it's merely a trick," replied Casperone. "I've never seen it."

The heavenly smile, then, that I had seen had been mine, mine alone. If that stern, dead face would soften but once more, I could go away with a blessing resting upon me. Casperone shifted his feet uneasily.

"What you can see in that picture is more than I can tell. I'll send you a large copy of it. You can get them anywhere along the Rue du Rivoli."

Suddenly I turned to him. "Will you come home with me this afternoon?" I asked.

"*Avec plaisir*," he whispered, flushing.

But his face brightened and he stooped to kiss my hand. With my handkerchief I brushed away the dampness his lips left on me.

"Then wait here until I speak to the concierge."

I walked hastily to a man in the corner, and demanded to know the nearest way out. I have wondered what Count Larodi thought I had asked. He must have noticed the violent gestures of the watchman, and, if he had been listening, heard the man's "*à la gauche*." I slipped out, and escaped.

In two minutes more I was walking rapidly into Place St. Michel.

. . . . . .

Long before I reached our trysting place, I saw Roger's stalwart form leaning against one of the many statues that adorn Paris. His greatcoat was drawn tightly up about his neck, and hanging loosely over the front of it was the same scarf I had noticed on him in Lady Jane's room.

"What an unceremonious leave you took last night!" he said smilingly as I came toward him. "I didn't intend you to go home alone."

"And I didn't wish to disturb you," I explained; "so I left the note and slipped away."

"Just like an American girl. But where can we go so

that we can be alone. I have something to talk over with you."

My heart leaped, and a great gladness filled my soul. I felt sure that I was the woman he loved. I managed to control myself and to keep the joy out of my eyes, the same happiness making it impossible for me to utter a word as we walked to a café close by.

After we had seated ourselves, he asked with some hesitation:

"Do you want to save money?"

"Yes," I blurted out.

"Ah! I hoped so! One doesn't know, in Paris, what will happen next. Now, I have a proposition to make to you, and if you don't like my idea we won't speak of it again."

As if he could have made any proposition I should not have liked!

"I have two nice fellows with me in a flat on the Rue du Bac. My mother is there, too, you know. We want you with us. I like the life on this side of the river better than the shallow, half-English-French existence over there, don't you?" and he made a motion toward the opposite riverbank.

I acquiesced with a nod.

"An American friend, Bruce Stewart, an English boy, my mother, and I live there with the housekeeper. There's a jolly little room to spare, and mother said she would be pleased to play propriety."

He was talking rapidly and didn't look at me. I was glad, for from the edge of my hair to the line of my neck I felt a telltale flush.

"But my expenses?" I hesitated.

"Oh, it's a visit I'm talking about." He laughed.

For a moment I imagined I saw in his face a divine light resembling that which had for a tiny second rested on

the picture in the Louvre. My only answer lay in my brimming eyes.

"Don't do that," he said pleadingly. "Do believe that I am partly selfish. Mother and I were speaking of it last night, and we want you to come. You will come, won't you? You will? Bravo! What jolly times we'll have! And we have a piano too, and if it isn't in tune we'll have someone come in to put it right. Mayn't I come and help you pack up?"

My heart nearly jumped out on the table. "No, I don't believe you can. You see, I have a roommate, and she —"

"Has a little green eyed monster in her eyes?" asked Roger, laughing.

"Something like it," I replied faintly.

The thought of Boulevard St. Michel rolled away like Christian's burden. No more should I see the dark faces that had grinned at me through the shadows; no more should I beg the filthy vagabond-money I had so coveted.

I went home to Zadie and woke her out of a sound sleep.

"I'm going away, Zadie," said I, "and I shall never come back here again."

"To America?" she demanded.

"No; with some friends. I want to tell you, Dear, how grateful I am to you for your kindness to me. Of course, I shall see you very soon."

"And you say you not come back here — to me — to lif?"

"No, Zadie; for when I have finished my visit I shall do something else. I can't come back."

This woman, on the shady side of life, and her tiny white dog were the only creatures associated with my boulevard life that I sorrowed to leave. My trunk was packed quickly, and before the falling of night on St.

Michel I was gone. As I left the house I met Lady Jane Grey coming in. She did not know that I was the one woman her American loved, and that at that moment I was going to him.

CHAPTER XVII

WHAT a dear, cozy little apartment this is! And I'm warm for the first time this winter. I'd rather be here in this room than in any other spot on earth. I should not have thought it possible for any girl to be so wildly happy, after having been so miserable. I want to know what it is to live, to be loved, and, best of all, I want to know what it is to love.

Roger came in and helped me to give some little homelike touches to my room. He brought in a bowl of Gloire de Dijon roses.

"The dear things!" I cried, burying my nose in them.

The scent of the roses carried me back to our old-fashioned garden at home, and to Aunty sitting in the basket-chair by the lavender bushes. I was still thinking of America when Roger, speaking, brought me back to the present.

"Mother told me to say she was sorry not to welcome you; but she'll surely be here by dinner. I've told the boys you were coming; but won't they be surprised when they see you? You know, Phyllis, I intimated to them that you were quite sedate and said that I really didn't know just how far you were from forty. You should have seen the kid's face drop! I wouldn't miss seeing him meet you for anything in the world." He was polishing my mirror as he spoke.

"I must tell you about the boys. Bruce is a dear chap — American, of course. He's too deucedly handsome to remain unmarried; although, as far as the kid and I can find out, he's not interested in anyone. He's a lump of

theories, too. He talks by the hour about science,— of Spencer, Darwin, and others who don't understand one word they're talking about. And what do you think? Sometimes he swears like a drunken trooper; but he's awfully decent, with a will power as strong as steel.

"The kid is Bruce's parrot. He's twenty, falls in love with every pretty woman he sees, and is a bit of a snob, too. That comes from studying at Eton. He ought to be at Oxford now; but he's to do a year in Paris first. I believe it's his father's greatest desire that his son should enter the diplomatic service; and the boy ought to do well with the money and influence he's got. I'm the only orthodox Christian in the crowd. I tell you all this for fear you'll get rather frightened at our conversations. They're purely theoretical." He laughed a little embarrassedly. "The arguments are heated sometimes, though. I always make it a point to challenge Bruce, and then the little fellow jumps in. It's really funny! There! Now I must run away. Doesn't that look quite like home?"

He viewed the dressing table with pride, and left me arranging my dresses in the wardrobe.

. . . . . .

At dinner Roger made the introductions,— first his mother, so fair and sweet, then a big man who looked me through with a golden gleam. I became dizzy as my mind raced away to that dreadful night when I hung half naked in a Paris theater. Of course, I had seen him; and his eyes have golden glints in them, after all. What a giant he is, taller than Roger, with a native dignity and compelling personality that frighten me a little. I think he is quite the best looking man I ever saw; and that's not depreciating Roger, either. One doesn't always love another person for his looks. But these thoughts changed as Roger went on:

"And this is Maxey Donnithorne, Miss Fitzpatrick."

The blood rushed to my cheeks, flaming hot to my forehead. The moment my eyes rested on the boy's face, I harked back to that day in the Place de la Madeleine when the soldiers forced the crowds from the church with their bayonets. The spitted priest with his upraised, unfathomable gaze shot into mind. Again the cries of the hurt and enraged mob rang in my ears. I shook involuntarily. The fair boy with seared eyes was before me, as if it were but yesterday, and I was again leading him through the streets to my home — and to Zadie, his mother.

I was vaguely answering some question put by Mrs. Everard, when Maxey broke in:

"Do you know, your voice seems familiar to me, Miss Fitzpatrick. And I can't make out where I've heard it."

"There are lots of voices that sound alike in this world, Max," joked Roger. "Pass up your plate for some ragout, old man."

After that I spoke as softly as I could. I did not want Maxey to associate me with — *Donnez moi un cadeau.*

Bruce Stewart, after his first keen glance, did not raise his eyes for a long time. Then he gave a long, fixed gaze that stirred my floating memories, and he studied my face as if it were a piece of crabbed writing. But he was not the only one guilty of looking at me; for I caught Maxey's furtive glance, and when I looked up he grew red and fidgeted in his chair until after Donna, the maid, had brought in the coffee. I left the room once to get my handkerchief, and heard him say:

"Roger, you nuisance, why didn't you tell a fellow just how she looked? It isn't playing the game!"

"There was nothing unfair about it, Maxey," Roger laughed.

Mrs. Everard broke in. "She is very sweet and good, I'm sure. Women are a great help in this world, aren't they, Roger?"

"Of course," Roger answered, and there was a tone of love in his voice.

I know that I shall be devoted to Mrs. Everard. After I came back, they ran on in ordinary conversation, and I ate in silence, satisfied to be there with *him*.

"Did I tell you, old chap," asked Max, looking at Mr. Stewart, "that my governor is laid up with the gout, and won't be able to get over here next week as he hoped? He hasn't been up to the mark ever since my brother died."

"Lord Donnithorne felt your brother's death keenly, didn't he, Max?" asked Bruce.

Maxey's eyes grew misty. "Yes — poor old Rupert!" he muttered. "He was the only one of us, save my father, who was anything but a rotter."

"But Lord Donnithorne told me that he expected you to keep up the family traditions, Max," Roger interjected.

"So he does, Roddy; but the truth is that I like having a good time too much to bother about ambitions like Rupert." The boy turned to me and went on, "You see, my brother married when he was but a kiddy, Miss Fitzpatrick. The mater stopped the thing off — I've heard the girl wasn't up to much."

"The girl wasn't up to much!" He was speaking of Zadie, the best of all good women in the world! How did her story measure up with his? The solution I deduced was that Lady Donnithorne had hidden her son's indiscretion by claiming Zadie's child as hers.

The Boulevard St. Michel has taught me that character is more than blood; environment more than family. Maxey could have inherited from his cocotte mother more nobility of soul than could have been transmitted to him by generations of sheltered dames. My dear, generous Zadie! Big souled woman that you are! How little you

know that the "leetle American fool" you befriended is in the same house with your son!

As Bruce and Maxey were talking together, Roger turned to me and said in a low voice:

"I'm going to take you to my studio some day, Miss Fitzpatrick. I'd like to interest you in a picture or two I have. I do some missionary work, too; that is, I try to. Have you ever been to the American Mission? Well, you must. We've done a lot for the women in the Latin Quarter."

I lowered my gaze, and Lady Jane flashed into my mind. He had been only trying to help her, then. What a good man he is! In upon my thoughts his voice came again.

"Life is all so wonderful, and I can't solve many of its mysteries!"

His tone was wistful, and his thoughts far away as if he saw with the eyes of his soul the thousands of weary women who, every night on the boulevards, bartered their souls for mere necessities.

After we had finished eating, I slipped away to my room, leaving Roger to take from my portfolio the songs he wished me to sing. I went to the open window, that the night wind might cool my face, leaning far above the almost deserted street. A woman standing in the shadow of the building opposite attracted my attention. The dyed gold of her hair, like a flame in darkness, was the only thing that caught the lamplight. The next moment she had singled a victim and was walking beside him. Yesterday I was like that woman! Tonight — protection — music — warmth — and him!

CHAPTER XVIII

THE first thing I saw when I went into the breakfast room this morning was a motto on the wall suspended from a red ribbon. "Be sure your sin will find you out," it read. A sudden little chill ran through my body. Roger caught my eyes.

"That's not for you, Miss Fitzpatrick," he said, with a merry laugh. "It's for Maxey. He's developed a nefarious habit of pilfering cake from the cupboard. You know, Mother is the famous cake-maker for us here. Poor darling, she's ill this morning. This life in Paris is so different from hers! Paris and Mother are as far apart as the two poles."

"I should think Utopia was the only place for your mother," said Maxey with energy.

"Utopia is the home-country of all mothers," said Bruce,—"or Heaven — call it what you like." Then he proceeded with a little laugh, "Miss Fitzpatrick, we hung the text there so that Maxey could see it every time he's tempted."

Maxey grinned sheepishly, and met this accusation by hurling bread pellets at his tormentors. During the battle I regained my equilibrium. For an instant I had been haunted by the ghost of St. Michel. It stepped out of the past with an accusing finger; but the text was only for Maxey and his pilfering. I could have hugged his curly head from his shoulders if I'd been given the chance. Yet, somehow, my appetite forsook me, and I left the table without eating much. Roger noticed it, and remonstrated with me.

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Maxey's motto has assumed a baneful meaning for me. In spite of Roger, in spite of everything, I long to tear it down. It is so like an evil omen that I have a superstitious dread of letting my eyes rest upon it. Sometimes an unreasoning fear that my own deception and sin will find me out darkly overcasts the dreams of my future.

The misgivings about those anxious days have driven me time and time again to the church, that I might kneel in supplication and repentance before the Mother of Sorrows.

Today, when I was leaving the altar at Notre Dame, a priest touched me on the arm. I turned and scanned the splendid son of the Church in admiration. A little cap, failing to confine the raven hair that clustered in rings high upon his intellectual brow, rested upon his head. Two piercing eyes, filled with physical magnetism, betrayed a virile temperament that even the vestments of the church had not extinguished.

"You come often," said he. "I've watched Mademoiselle grow from an unbeliever into a devotee of the Blessed Virgin, praise her Holy Name!"

He spoke in perfect English and with religious enthusiasm, and involuntarily crossed himself. I, likewise, touched my forehead with my fingers.

"Yes, I am almost a convert," I answered slowly.

He smiled. "Has Mademoiselle a confessor?"

"No. I'm not a member of your Church."

"But why, Mademoiselle?"

"Well — there are some things I could not give up even for religion."

He walked beside me to the door where a Sister of Charity held out her hand pleadingly for the sou that I never failed to give.

"Some outsiders," exclaimed the priest, "are of the opinion that the Church orders more from her children

than they are able to perform. The conscience has nothing to do with the Church. Obey her law, and penance is unnecessary."

"I am afraid I do not understand her law," I said.

We halted when we reached the pavement. My eyes roved back over the magnificent, sacred structure, taking in the sculptured Satan tugging at a long line of sinners. Then my glance followed the priest's upward gaze to a group far above, representing Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The Tree of Knowledge bloomed between them; a creature with a woman's head and a serpent's body swung in twisted contortions from its branches. This half-woman, half-snake, was offering the proverbial apple to the hesitant Eve.

The priest turned to me. "That is the problem of life," said he, after gazing thoughtfully at the representation of the tragic deception, "the tempting of the woman planned for the destruction of the man. Men and women will eat of the Tree of Knowledge until the end of time. Christ alone has alleviated the punishment for man's presumption in partaking of the forbidden fruit."

The trembling contraction of his lips on this last statement mellowed the rich voice, sending it sobbing into his throat, and his fingers ran over the rosary as if the touch of the beads imparted a mysterious strength of soul.

For a moment my heart beat loudly. A liquid fire rushed through my veins to my fingertips, and I held my breath. It was a new thought to me. *Adam and Eve! Man and Woman — and temptation between them!* Was love, then, the apple of the serpent? If so, I too longed to eat of the Tree of Knowledge; for only a few hours before I had discovered in Roger's eyes a something that drew me almost unresistingly to him. The Tree of Good and Evil had spread its fruit-laden branches over *me!*

The priest addressed me again, and handed me a card.

"If you, Mademoiselle, desire divine instruction, will you come to my home?"

I told him that I would gladly avail myself of his proffer, and took leave of him. Looking backward, I saw him gazing after me. I wondered if he were happy in his chosen calling. He was forced by his conscience and priestly vows to live without loving. To love and to be loved was, to me at that moment, more desirable than Heaven itself.

. . . . . .

A whole month has gone by, and I haven't had the inclination to open this book. I am still in Roger's home; for Mrs. Everard would not hear my protestations that my visit had lasted too long.

Two days after my chance interview with the priest, something happened that wrought a change in me that even the dark boulevards had been unable to accomplish. I scarcely know how to write about it, and if Mrs. Everard had not been spending the day with a friend the opportunity would never have been given me to make this — this confession.

I had had an hour with Marquise in the afternoon, and upon my arrival home I met Roger at the lift entrance, and we ascended together.

"I believe you are happy here," he said, with a smile, helping me to take off my wraps.

The youth within me bounded lightly and joyfully when his fingers touched my arm. I raised my eyes to his; but withdrew my gaze quickly, and a tingling flush dyed my face and neck at the sight of his sudden emotion.

"Happy," I breathed, "happy! I have never been so exquisitely happy in all my life."

"Phyllis," he said in an uncertain voice, "and I never lived until you came. You have changed the whole of the world for me."

I trembled, and could neither voluntarily move nor speak to answer him.

"Oh, Darling — Darling!" and, almost simultaneously with his words, I was receiving the sacrament of my lover's first kiss.

In Boulevard St. Michel I had known physical hunger; but the unsated hunger of the heart is more excruciating and unbearable than even prolonged bodily hunger,— its maddening, insistent demand against the spirit-portals drives one's mind to distraction. Roger's kiss was ambrosia to my soul, enthralling my inner self with drowsy imaginings. As the tide seethes seaward to gather new impetus, so, during a confused, fantastic dream, my girlhood rushed into womanhood.

"You're so alive!" Roger whispered. "I could — I could crush you!" He caressed my hair and my eyes and my lips. "My sweet, my sweet!" he murmured hoarsely.

"Roger! Roger! Never kiss me — like that — again! You mustn't! You mustn't!"

I remember breaking from his kisses.

Two hours later Maxey's boyish voice drifted into my room, and roused me from my chaotic abandonment of delightful thought.

. . . . . .

Roger's mother was ill in bed, poor dear! and consequently was not present that Saturday evening at dinner when a great discussion took place among Roger, Maxey, and Bruce Stewart. I was too depressed to eat, and during the first two courses Roger meditated moodily in silence.

At last he roused himself. "I suppose you fellows are going to roam about again tonight?"

"Yes," remarked Bruce. "Paris begins to live only

in the evening, and on till two or thereabouts. And what an amusing, bizarre life it is!"

"I don't look upon it that way," Roger observed. "It seems to me a whirligig of tormented souls without rest, without hope."

The images of the chained sinners carved on Notre Dame floated before me.

"After all, like ourselves, the owners of those souls are working out their own salvation," Bruce commented, turning to include me in his explanation. "Life is an immense kindergarten, a school in which there are a thousand standards. When a soul needs quick progression, Miss Fitzpatrick, its experience is violent and terrible. The lowest person in the world may be nearer his final evolution than the Archbishop of Canterbury. What are called sins are but experiences needed by graduating souls."

The significance of his gaze almost forced me to believe that he knew of the link that affiliated me with the half-world of Paris.

"Standard!" ejaculated Roger, ignoring the latter part of Bruce's emphatic statement. "Standard! The only standard in the world is the Cross of Christ!"

For one instant Bruce studied Roger's face contemplatively. "If that's really your belief, Everard," said he, "then that faith in Christ is what your soul needs to graduate."

"I think Bruce's theory is jolly sensible," broke in Maxey earnestly; "for it does away with the injustice of God."

Roger swept the boy with quizzical query; but turned to Bruce in warning. "Stewart, you may not believe it now, but one day you'll admit that there's no truth save in the Bible, and no word but God's, and there is a command for all the Elect to live apart from sinners."

My face went red, my cheeks burned hot. For a flitting instant Roger seemed arrogantly detestable.

"And you, old man," replied Bruce softly, "will learn that there's no Eternal Power, sacrificial or otherwise, that has decreed an enmity between any of God's creatures. We humans make our lives as we will. Love is the great ruling power of the universe! God — or Good, as you like — gives every man his desire. If you think poverty, poverty will come; think happiness, and it's yours. But it's all good, though, everything, everybody. It just needs working out, that's all."

As he spoke, I looked directly at him. Everything good, everybody good! No more sacrifices, no more bloodshed! What a beautiful thought! Bruce Stewart lifted his eyes to me with a smile and went on:

"The principle of home-building and food-finding, Miss Fitzpatrick, has done more to civilize the human race than the numberless books written upon the idea of Christ and His Cross. The religious instinct is secondary to the self-preserving and other instincts. The whole of civilization is based upon these principles. They have been the whips that have lashed humanity forward."

How noble and beautiful he was! Roger's noncommittal silence caused Bruce to rise good humoredly to his feet.

"Come along, Max: we ought to start at once. We mustn't bore Miss Fitzpatrick with our arguments."

Roger and I were alone at last. He made no movement to take me in his arms; but drew me, reluctant, into the drawing-room.

"Shall we go to a theater, Phyllis?" he suggested hoarsely.

I shook my head.

"Will you go out for a walk?"

"No."

"Then — sing for me."

He bent over my portfolio with a determined gesture.

I seated myself at the piano and allowed him to place a song before me. In so doing, his hand touched me, and I caught at it faint and dizzy and unnerved. His arms fell about me, and he dropped his lips upon mine. Subdued passionate tones murmured my name endearingly, and his breath flooded hot over my eyes. A wicked fever tore through my veins, destroying and eating up every moral sense.

I felt myself lifted, wrapped in his arms, and his lips, perfumed with health and love, roved over my face in sweet freedom. God's Nectar ran through my veins — my blood was transmuted by a fairy godmother of love and life into a livid fluid of happiness, and — and with *him* I lost myself in ecstasy.

. . . . . .

It must have been two hours later when Mrs. Everard's bell summoned me to her chamber.

"Were you and Roger both in the drawing-room?" she asked faintly.

The muscles in my forehead and cheeks twitched nervously, making me conscious of awkwardness and confusion in the presence of Roger's mother. I tugged at my high blouse-collar, to ease the heavy throbbing in my throat, feeling limply grateful for the protecting dull green shade of the night-lamp. In spite of my attempts to answer her question naturally, I could only utter a harsh, inflected "Yes."

"Why haven't you been singing, Phyllis?" Mrs. Everard paused, and added almost fretfully, "I wish you would sing, Dear."

Sing! I couldn't have sung for anyone in the world just then — not just then!

"I wish you would give me a drink of water," she broke in on my thoughts.

She had already forgotten her request that I should sing. In relief I hurriedly lifted the glass and held it to her lips.

"You are trembling, Child — are you ill?"

"No — not ill — but I think I'll go to bed."

"Do, Phyllis dear. You stay up too late. You should retire earlier."

I drew the covering about her shoulders and kissed her tremblingly.

"Phyllis, my Roger is the best man in all the world! Isn't he?"

"The very best!" I moaned, and went out, closing the door.

The trembling that had hastened my retreat from Mrs. Everard made my feet lag in my approach to Roger. Yet it seemed that my whole future welfare lay in getting back into his arms.

His white face increased my agitation, and the intensity with which he rose to his feet, and the spontaneous throwing out of his hands, held my halting, upward glance.

The self-reproach in his eyes swept my embarrassment from me as if it had been washed away by a tidal wave.

I stood on tiptoe and unblushingly challenged his repentance. "Roger, Roger, dear love, I shall remember — this night as long as I live!"

His face fell into his hands, and bitter tears rained through his fingers.

"But," I continued hoarsely, "I will work as you have never seen a woman work. Are you listening, Roger? I will make myself as great as even you wish me to be! You can ask me nothing that I will not do!"

In passionate gesture he crushed my face against his breast. "Phyllis! Phyllis! Beloved!"

. . . . . .

I've been to see Zadie! The darling dear! But — but I didn't tell her anything about — Roger and me!

. . . . . .

"Child," exclaimed Marquise one morning, "your voice is so much improved! Something has changed you. You know, my dear, we who want to be artists must suffer like the singing birds in Italy, whose owners pierce their eyes with redhot needles to put *sympatica* into their tones."

It's true I have suffered, and to relive it acutely I have but to sit in the gathering twilight, to listen to the sobbing of the wind in the corner of the room or to the steady patter of the rain upon the roof. Formerly, these meant romance to me; but now they savor only of the Latin Quarter and fill the nostrils of my imagination with the nauseating stench of patchouli.

As the ancient God once stroked into permanence the three dark stripes on the back of the chipmunk, so the agony of my struggle has marked me with secretiveness, suspicion, and disquietude.

Day has an unprecedented meaning for me,— a brighter, bigger, holier significance than heretofore. I am a veritable woman of the sun, of the hours when good people are abroad, and I go into the light loving every little ray of sunshine; although when I am in the street with Roger I am menaced with fear that I may meet some of the women I have known. The idea overwhelms me, and brings Lady Jane Grey, with her snakelike movements, vividly to my mind. But Lady Jane Grey is a woman of the night,— she sleeps with the other wanderers of the boulevards. But — What a slender thread my security hangs on!

. . . . . .

A letter has been forwarded from Casperone. I imagined that I could see in Roger's eyes a desire to know something about it; but I laid it disinterestedly beside my plate, and afterward in my room I opened it and read:

How dared you leave me sitting in the Louvre like a fool? I waited for at least half an hour, before I asked the guide where you had gone. You pretend to be so upright and good; but next time I shall know how far to trust you. But I will gladly forgive you, Phyllis, if you will come to me at the above address, where I have prepared a room for you. Phyllis dear, come! I want you — I need you! I shall wait for you you this evening. Send your trunk on ahead, and the maid will have everything in order for you.

P. S. I have seen Lady Jane Grey.

The paper dropped from my fingers. First I laughed, then I caught my breath with fright, calling to mind the postscript which, when I read it, had impressed me least of all. I snatched up the letter and whispered:

"I have seen Lady Jane Grey!"

Lady Jane Grey and Casperone! The letter once more fluttered to the table. Would they dare to use their knowledge to separate me from Roger? In his desire for me, Casperone would overthrow my happiness.

Those last six words, "I have seen Lady Jane Grey," stood out with sinister aspect. The beautiful cocotte had told Larodi of my past, and he would —

Rampant with fury, I tore up the letter and threw it violently from me.

. . . . . .

I'm gathering courage to tell Roger all the miserable tale of my life on the boulevards. When he knows how I strove to find work, how I almost died from frost and hunger, he'll take me in his arms; and, after I have told him, I shall be the happiest woman in the world.

CHAPTER XIX

THAT was two whole months ago. I shouldn't lose one day, one hour, of that time, although there have been ages of overwhelming sorrow, even terror! Roger's apparent remorse has kept me at times in a tumult of suspense. But I try not to repent. I won't allow certain thoughts to come into my mind. I won't! I won't! I just sing, work, and live for him.

Yesterday he was silent during dinner, and a harassed expression settled about his lips. Afterward, when we were alone together and I was sitting at the piano, he startled me with a question:

"Phyllis, where are you and I drifting? Will you tell me that?"

He asked me this so suddenly that my hands came down on the keys with a crash.

"Drifting?" I repeated. "We're not drifting. We're living — that's all!"

He paused in his restless march up and down the room and dropped heavily into a chair. I slipped from the stool and sank at his feet. The majesty of a great passion that had colored each day and rose-tinted my dreams was upon me. His fingers roved abstractedly in my hair.

"Roger," I went on dreamily, "I think that the Godhead with Its attributes of the male and female must be instinct with the same kind of love we have, you and I,— that one great passion given to all living creatures by the God who created us."

Roger straightened his shoulders. "What's that you say, Phyllis?"

"I believe that God gave us our love; that He made us with natures attuned to each other, so that we might be able to reach the heights that He Himself has reached; that the millions of worlds were created just with such love as dominates you and me. It's all within God and of God. It's all very good!"

My head fell against his knee, and I was silent. I didn't remember then that I had quoted Bruce's words. Of course Bruce didn't mean, when he said "Everything is good," just what I did. I hate even to write it; but somehow I believe Bruce Stewart is better than Roger — I mean in a big, big way. As for myself, I may argue differently; but I know all the time that I'm the wickedest girl in the whole wide world.

"Phyllis, that's desecration!" Roger exclaimed presently.

"I say we are not drifting!" I continued, rousing myself again. "We both work, don't we? We have our studies, and we have our ambitions, and — we know what our future is to be — don't we, Roger?"

I was thinking of that not far distant day when we should marry.

"But we've been such sinners!" he said.

"No, we're not wicked!" I exclaimed, with rising tears. "We didn't make ourselves! We have each other — that's all we need. I won't be scolded! I won't! Do you see? There! There! Kiss — me!"

I mumbled the end of the sentence with my lips crushed upon his, my arms locked about his neck.

"My own darling!" he breathed, as he held me close to him — and lectured me no more.

. . . . . .

But I'm not quite so happy as I was. There is no such thing as forgetting; no time when happiness and unhappiness do not alternately rise before me, as the shades

of midnight creep out with the small hours. There's a cloud in my sky no larger than a man's hand — yet it is there. I would gladly brush it away; but I cannot. It haunts my waking hours, and darkens my dreams; it makes me restless and apprehensive. Sometimes when moodiness gets into Roger's eyes I cover them with kisses until he smiles at my impetuousness.

. . . . . .

Today is Sunday, and, as we were coming back from the English church, Roger's face was sterner than usual.

"I feel a hypocrite, Phyllis," he burst out, "a traitor to my own principles. I feel the anger of God heavy on my soul. What you said the other day is sophistry — nothing but sophistry! How could you compare God's love for creation with that of His creature's for each other? Do you put the Creator of the worlds on a level with beasts, Phyllis?"

"No," I replied quickly. "I couldn't make Him an eating and drinking God — that's all that makes men, women, and animals earthly. But I believe His spirit is in everything,— men, beasts, flowers, and all,— and I thank Him for the power He has given you and me to love, which is and must be the God within us."

"Phyllis, please don't try to satisfy your conscience in that way. It's dangerous ground upon which you stand. It seems to me that you must have had a very queer education."

"I was brought up in your Church," I answered bluntly; "although I do not, and cannot, accept it all. I won't allow anyone to say my love for you is wicked! I know it's not!"

"Where did you get your ideas, Phyllis? I never heard such sentiments expressed in all my life! You would grant forgiveness without repentance, would make right out of wrong! You would turn the world upside

down, make strong institutions weak, and lower the standard of manhood and womanhood! It's all wrong — wrong, I say!"

I turned squarely upon him. "I can't see it, Roger. You love me, don't you? And I love you! I have my ambitions, and you have yours. You say that God made my singing voice, your brain, your talent. Then you argue that the Evil One is responsible for the love that is within us. It is *that* power in human beings that is related to the Creator,— love, just love!"

"You're too young, Dear, to juggle with the problems of the Almighty," he returned with finality.

When we're married — and of course he'll ask me soon — Roger will be happier.

We reached home, and met Maxey and Bruce coming in from the opposite direction.

. . . . . .

Mrs. Everard was really too weak to go out today, and remained in her bed until noon. Donna had gone to do the marketing, and I was alone polishing the back of my silver brush, when Maxey opened the door and walked in.

"Oh, you dear boy, to come home when I was feeling so lonely!" I cried, as he flung himself down. "What's made you forsake Bruce this morning?"

He flushed to the roots of his hair. "I wanted to see you," he said slowly.

"That's nice," I replied. "Then you can help me by rubbing this stain from my brush."

"Oh, Phyllis — I wish you always wouldn't treat me as if I were a child! I'm an ass; but I'm not a kid! I'm older than you are, remember."

"Why, Maxey!" I laughed. "You'll be telling me that you're going to get married next."

"Well, why shouldn't I? Oh, I don't believe a word of the nonsense that a chap shouldn't marry young!"

"Goodness me! You don't mean to tell me that you're engaged?"

"There's only one woman that I want to marry. Phyllis, I love you so much — I — want to marry you! I must marry you, I tell you!"

He was deadly earnest now, and I got to my feet quickly, dropping the brush on the table.

"Maxey, have you taken leave of your senses? Have you completely lost your mind?"

"Oh, you think that just because I have talked rot with the boys ever since you've been here. But I was only gassing, Phyllis. I will give you my solemn oath upon that!" His voice choked. "I'd — I'd — I'd rather have you — love me — than be the greatest philosopher in all Europe!"

Tears stood in his blue eyes. The mingling emotions that surged through me at the boy's avowal made me blush and blanch.

"I've loved you ever since you came here, Phyllis, and you're the best girl in the world!"

I shouldn't have marveled at Maxey's tribute to my goodness if he had paid it at the time I left Boulevard St. Michel to come here; but I've changed since then, and I'm no longer a girl. And Roger has wrought the change! It was a woman that he accused of sophistry, and in my better self I know my argument was sophistry. I was arguing for my happiness, and to make him less remorseful. And it is the woman in me who, through love for him and for his love, would turn traitress, and sacrifice every principle. Roger had said we had been drifting,— drifting because I had given him the most that one human soul could yield to another. Well, we shouldn't be wicked if he'd ask me to marry him.

Maxey's coaxing, babyish voice drifted to me devoid of meaning; but suddenly his words caught my attention.

"Phyllis, it's only right that I should love you. The other fellows are too old."

Roger old! With his magnificent physique, his strength, his superb vitality! And Bruce, too, I thought of his giant body, and wondered at the boy's remark. With a motion of my hand I silenced Maxey's torrent of words.

"Hush, hush! You mustn't speak to me of marriage. I do not love you. You're too young to think of being married. You have a career to make, and so have I."

"I know no end of fellows the same age as I am, who've made great names for themselves after they've married," he stammered out bravely, winking back the tears. "I wasn't asking you to marry me right away, Phyllis: I just want to know that you are mine, that's all. There's no reason why you shouldn't go on with your singing,—there's nothing like real love to make people do big things."

If such were the case, I ought to be able to move a mountain under the influence of my love for Roger Everard. It rushed upon me that he had never breathed a word of marriage. He had only asked me whither we were drifting. The cloud in my sky had suddenly broadened to such proportions that I feared it would envelop the brightness of my life. Was a sword keener than that of Damocles hanging over my head?

"The first impulse of a fellow who isn't a cad," Maxey continued, as if he had been influenced by my thoughts, "is to ask a girl to marry him when he loves her in the right sort of way. Will you think about it, Phyllis?"

"No!" I replied sharply; for his words hurt me so! "No, Maxey! Can't you see that I don't love you?"

"But you might if you tried," he insisted miserably.

My mind caught at a thought compelling my imagination to picture a horror of which I had not dreamed. If Roger were to tell me that he did not love me, my pain

would be a thousand times greater than Maxey's. Roger was my husband without the rights of the law! He was my mate with or without the sanction of Heaven! Why had he let Maxey be the first one to speak of marriage to me? The boy's words echoed through my brain. A man who truly loves a woman asks her to marry him the very first thing! Roger had not!

"I couldn't love you, Maxey; for I love someone else," I murmured.

He rose quickly. "It isn't —" he began agitatedly.

"It's no one you know," I interrupted, fearing that he would pounce upon Roger's name.

"Some — one — in — America?" he managed to stammer out.

"Yes, someone in America."

Maxey went out, closing the door softly behind him. He must have seen my distress; but thought in his boyish delicacy that he had not the right to soothe me.

When Roger came in he found a forlorn, red-eyed girl. I rushed to him.

"Roger, oh, Roger! You do love me, don't you? Oh, tell me that you do! I shall die if you don't!"

He drew me into his arms, and sat in the large chair, his face unnaturally pale and grave. "Phyllis, what's happened? You mustn't cry like that! Do you hear? Tell me instantly!"

His peremptory order comforted me; for he gave it as if I belonged to him. He wouldn't speak with such authority, save where he was sure he reigned master.

"Maxey!" I murmured.

"Oh, it's Maxey, is it? I imagined something had happened to the kid. I met him looking as glum as an oyster, and he muttered something about being an old bachelor forever —"

I stopped Roger's flow of merry words with passionate

kisses. I wanted — oh, how I wanted to hear him claim me!

"Phyllis," he murmured, "Phyllis, what a little witch you are! The man who could not love you would indeed have to be without a heart."

He enveloped me in his strong arms, and Maxey was forgotten. I am happy — God, dear God, how happy!

CHAPTER XX

CASPERONE has written to me again,— a serious, pleading, lovesick letter, offering to make me a Countess, and to endow me with his worldly goods, setting at naught relatives and all else. But the coronet of a Countess has no attraction for me; for I had rather be with Roger than marry any Count in the world. I wrote very briefly, therefore, declining Casperone's dazzling proposals.

When Roger came in he caught me scribbling. "One would think you were writing a book, Phyllis," he said. "You know this is Saturday night, and I always think of it as our night."

At this the clouds lifted, the sky was blue, and my figurative sun shone brightly.

"How's Mother tonight?" he asked. "I worry over her health all the time. Isn't she a darling? A gentler, sweeter woman a fellow couldn't possibly imagine. No boy could have had a truer friend than she has been to me. She is such a good woman, too!"

I admired his filial devotion and love; but I couldn't help wincing. He stooped over me in concern.

"Phyllis, you look pale and tired. Don't write any more in that book of yours. Go and have a rest before dinner."

If I only could have told him! I must tell him soon! But he will ask me to marry him first — I won't be afraid. He *must* ask me to marry him before — that!

. . . . . .

In the hush of the quiet Sabbath afternoon I'm writing down last night's occurrences. Mrs. Everard ate her dinner in bed, and there was the usual discussion between Maxey and Bruce as to women and marriage. I noticed that Maxey has turned to be an ardent advocate for conventions. He was looking directly at me as he talked. Bruce laughed, and Roger smiled at the boy quizzically.

"What's caused this sudden revolution in your feelings, Maxey?" he asked.

"I never really believed in any old theory that marriage was a blow to man's individuality — and I believe it less — now — than I ever did. Every man ought to marry a good woman."

"You're right, Max, in a way," replied Roger gravely; "but a woman who is not good, though, can prove the most devastating influence in a man's life."

It seems lately that everything that is said comes home to me. "Roger," I exclaimed, "it is not fair to women to say that! It's the man that makes the woman either one way or the other, good or bad. If she is not as she should be, it is he — who — places her where she is!"

It seemed as if I were making the last appeal to him. My plea finished the argument. Donna brought in the coffee. Roger suggested as we left the table that he and I should take an airing and do the Saturday night's shopping. Something awesomely new hovering over me left me strangely silent. Had it to do with the mysterious secret I was guarding in my heart,— a wonderful, sacred secret I dared share with no one yet, not even Roger?

"What's the matter with you, Phyllis?" he asked cheerfully. "You don't get air enough. I'm going to take you out every day after this. You look peaked and pale."

My heart gave a little flutter. If I only dared tell him that it was not lack of fresh air! I wanted him to talk

of our future. But it comforted me to feel his warm, strong hand pressing my arm, to muse for an instant over his concern for my health. God! When a woman loves a man how little he has to concede to satisfy her!

Later, when we were walking leisurely past the Luxembourg Gardens, a woman issued unexpectedly from a by-street. Just before she reached us, she accosted a man who, looking critically at her, rushed on with a grunt. By this time we were in front of her, directly under one of the great disk lights. Something in the quick movement of surprise, her furtive glance at Roger and evident avoidance of us, made me scan her closely through the shadows. Then I came face to face with Captain Zadie. I put out my hands, stopping so suddenly that it startled Roger.

"Captain Zadie!" I gasped. "Dear, precious Captain Zadie!"

I had forgotten even him. His very presence had faded away before the memories of my days with her. This dear, big woman had offered me bread when I was hungry, had warmed me when I was freezing! She turned at my voice. For an instant I saw a glad expression pass over her face,—a look of delight, a look of eagerness, of incredulity,—then she leaned against the wall and her mouth twisted up into a wry smile.

"What have I to do with the likes of you?" she demanded in vulgar French, the disdain in her eyes shifting to one of warning. "The young madam has made a mistake."

I gathered myself together, and glanced into Roger's face. It had grown white as death.

"Come, Phyllis!" he whispered. "Of course you have made a mistake. Of course you have! You don't know that woman?" He uttered it interrogatively, commandingly, as if he would force me to admit that I had mistaken

her for a friend. The dear, red face shone with a heavenly light. Zadie changed from French to English and lisped:

"The leetle madam meestakes. She meestakes, that's all."

Disconcerted blood leaped into my face; but the world full of tenderness in her voice set my heart throbbing. Roger drew me forward; but somehow I wanted to remain with the fat, silent figure stationed against the wall.

"Phyllis, why in the world did you stop that vile being? She is a woman of the street!"

I realized what I had done, and yet I did not feel sorry. Wild horses couldn't have dragged me past Captain Zadie without a word or a sign to her, not even if it had cost me — Roger!

"I thought," I said in shaking tones, "that she was a friend of mine that had once been in England."

"I'm sorry you spoke to her," he answered almost fiercely. "She was a common, awful looking woman. You could have nothing to do with such as her!"

My heart prompted the next stubborn tone in my voice. "The woman I'm thinking of was good, very good, and I loved her."

"She couldn't have been the woman we've just passed," Roger commented.

The incident, I know, left Roger's mind; but the sight of Zadie's face as she backed against the ivy-covered garden wall will always be with me.

As soon as I can, I am going to see her again.

. . . . . .

I've tried to confess my past to Roger. Every time I open my lips, I remember how he spoke of Zadie. I won't tell him yet — not until he asks me to marry him.

I'm happy today. Roger's mother has been so sweet to me! The gentle, high-bred expression on her face, and

the occasionally humorous twinkle that creeps about the corner of her mouth, remind me of Roger. I sang for her last night, and I saw her blue eyes grow dim as she listened. Instead of thanking me, she said:

"Oh, my dear, my dear! You must often sing that for me. It takes me back to my youth. Phyllis, we can be young only once!"

. . . . . .

Last night Maxey took Mrs. Everard to the theater. We remaining three were sitting over our coffee after they had gone, when Bruce observed:

"These women in the cafés puzzle me."

"Haven't you found a working theory about them yet, you truth-seeker?" Roger asked a little sarcastically.

"It is impossible to form a working theory when there isn't a general type. There aren't two of them alike."

"Why, Bruce!" I cried. "You speak as if they were insects under a microscope. They're human beings!"

"Yet, I suppose that, unless one treats human beings as insects under a microscope, it is impossible to devolve systems of philosophy, and systems are needed. Poor, suffering souls!" He took another lump of sugar abstractedly.

"The kind that try me most," Roger burst forth, "are those that bound at you like an animal, and demand a present. What's the difference between them and real beggars? If a chap selling lead-pencils or papers were to take a sou over an established price, and the officers noticed it, he would be arrested at once; but these women —"

I heard no more. *Donnez moi un cadeau* drowned the rest. *Donnez moi* — Oh, to think of it makes me ill! I got up hastily from the table, went into my room, and turned the key. My soul was smarting under a sting I hoped was dead.

Roger knocked at my door and asked if I were ill. I

controlled my voice sufficiently to answer him. On my assurance that I was all right, he went reluctantly back, and I heard him and Bruce deep in discussion until the others returned.

"Where's Phyllis?" asked Maxey.

"Oh, she's gone to bed with a headache," said Roger, and the next thing I heard a gentle knock on my door.

"May I come in, my dear?" murmured Mrs. Everard.

A longing for a woman's sympathy made me rush to the door and unlock it. Roger's mother took me in her arms, and I think, in the subdued light, she noticed my swollen eyes, for it was with more than usual tenderness that she said:

"Poor little girl! you must get into bed. I will bring you something that will make you sleep away your headache."

I wondered, as her hands smoothed my forehead, if she had ever been tempted in all her gentle, even life.

CHAPTER XXI

I HAVE a class of boys at the mission, to teach and amuse,— the veriest little gamins of the boulevards. I, myself, have coaxed them to me one by one, and now I have eleven of different ages. Their names were at first difficult to remember; but I have succeeded in learning each one by heart. At the mission last Sunday, Roger made me proud by openly complimenting my class.

That evening at dinner, Mrs. Everard said, "I've never seen anything like the power Phyllis has over those dirty little urchins. They simply adore her. Did you notice how quiet they were when you were talking to them, Roger?"

"Of course I did," replied Roger, and Bruce said steadily:

"All children, big and little, adore Phyllis," and Roger laughed roguishly at me.

. . . . . .

Last Wednesday we prepared a great surprise. I took Maxey into my confidence, and Mrs. Everard, too. To have left out Bruce would have spoiled it all; so he too joined our party. When I began to explain my plan, all entered into it heartily.

"You see," said I, "I want to give the boys a nice time and to keep it a secret from Roger; but I can't do it alone."

"Tell us about it," exclaimed Mrs. Everard.

"I want to give them a little supper here; to have the whole eleven at this flat, and stuff their little stomachs with all kinds of good things."

"And give the youngsters dyspepsia for a month to come," remarked Bruce.

"Good food won't hurt them for once," put in Mrs. Everard. "I will do all I can to help you, Phyllis."

"And I'll make the sandwiches," Maxey supplemented. "I'm a genius at cutting bread straight. But why don't you tell Roger?"

My face reddened; but I answered quickly, "It would be such great fun to surprise him! You know he is so interested in anything connected with the mission!"

I looked up as I said this, and met a quick glance from Bruce; but he didn't say anything. I think he's interested, too, in children. He couldn't help but be, with his universal love.

Oh, dear! what pains a woman will take to please the man she worships!

. . . . . .

Bruce and Maxey were almost as interested as I in the supper, and Mrs. Everard took a childish delight in the arrangements. We cut sandwiches in secret, and imported big cakes into Donna's storeroom right under Roger's unsuspecting nose.

Just before the hour appointed for the arrival of our young guests, Roger came bounding in, and found the four of us in guilty conclave.

"Phyllis," he cried, "I've succeeded in getting some first-night theater tickets for you and me. Aren't you glad? It's that new play we spoke of the other night."

In consternation I turned hastily to the other three. Maxey snorted into his handkerchief.

"I'm sorry, Roger," I faltered; "but — but I have plans for tonight."

His face fell, and I detected a touch of hurt feeling in his voice as he said, "As I am excluded from Phyllis's plans, will you come, Mother?"

"Darling, I'm sorry; but I'm going to do something else, too."

Roger shrugged his shoulders. "Then we two old bachelors will go, Bruce."

"Sorry, old chap: I'm *hors de combat* with the rest."

"I suppose Maxey has a previous engagement?" Roger eyed the boy suspiciously.

"Right you are, Roddy," observed Maxey cheerfully.

"But you are included in our plans, Roger," I interposed, taking a step toward him. "It's a surprise for you."

"But the theater!" he complained. "Is the surprise worth the loss of the tickets?"

"I — think so."

"Then let the tickets go. But you ought to tell me the secret now. It isn't fair to keep me in the dark."

"Not yet, not yet, Roger!" I cried. "You shall know at eight o'clock."

To prove how important I thought the occasion, I dressed in my best frock and arranged roses in my hair. Apart from my wish to please Roger, I was delighted with the prospect of having the tots with me and of seeing their eyes shine with happiness. At last the moment arrived, and as the bell pealed I rushed with flaming cheeks to meet our little guests. Nearing, I heard subdued, angry tones, and above the babble sounded the broken sobs of one little voice. I opened the door.

"Teacher, teacher *chérie!* Mayn't I come? Mayn't I come in, too?"

"Antoine's a dirty pig," broke in two or three voices in unison. "He's used no soap today."

"Hush, Boys!" I commanded. "Hush! Come in quietly and explain. Antoine dear, come here!"

The boy came immediately to my side, and lifted upward a begrimed small face, as he shoved a dirty set of

fingers into mine. I led him into the drawing-room, the others trooping after.

Bruce stood smiling genuinely amused, while Mrs. Everard held up her hands with a laugh.

"You've certainly enough to do now," she said, patting my protégé's head consolingly.

"What's the matter?" asked Max.

"Never mind, Max," I said. "Go away. I'll settle it. Now tell me, Boys!" I insisted, holding fast to Antoine. "Tell me all about it. It'll be all right."

"Antoine's mother isn't good," put in Muret, a boy of ten, with flashing black eyes. "She ought to be spitted, my mother says."

"Muret!" I chided, as I felt the small hand in mine tremble and tug away. "No, Antoine, no! You mustn't!"

But I couldn't hold him. Before the words were from my lips he had darted like an arrow upon his tormentor. I was struggling to separate them, when another figure rushed forward, and my two pugnacious urchins were dragged apart by Bruce.

"Phyllis, Phyllis!" he laughed, holding Muret in one hand and Antoine in the other. "What's the matter with your brood?"

Roger appeared in the doorway. "And this is your secret, is it?" he said. "Well, it is a surprise! What have the youngsters been doing?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," I replied in dismay. "Antoine, come to me!"

With a dark glance at Muret, the child shuffled forward.

"Now then, Dear," I said determinedly, "there must be no trouble between you and Muret just when I want you to be happy. Muret, it's wrong of you to speak disrespectfully of Antoine's mother."

"She's a—"

"She's not!" screamed Antoine again. "She's good, she is!"

I placed my hand over his mouth. "Antoine, we'll go away for a few moments and wash off the tears, and when we come back Muret shall apologize, and we'll all be happy."

I smiled into his small, puckered face. He was the darling of my flock. I loved his swaggering walk, the fearless way he carried his head, and his rattling boulevard French.

Roger was eying me dubiously, and, glancing at him, I said:

"Yes, that's my surprise! Won't you stay with us and help?"

He came toward me with impulsive tenderness. "Phyllis, what a little schemer you are! Of course I'll stay. Wash up your young gentleman there, and we'll give him a royal time."

He patted Antoine on the head. My heart bounded with delight.

"Antoine's mother is a cocotte!" shouted Muret suddenly, raising his voice to a triumphal shriek.

I came to a standstill, catching my breath as if a hand had clutched my throat. Muret's face shone with accomplished revenge. His proud, dark-lidded eyes lowered tauntingly. I caught a glance from Bruce, and a strange, pitying expression whitened his face. He was sending me a message of sympathy. I am wondering now why? For a moment Antoine stood with clenched fists, then with a sob he sank limply to the floor, hiding his shamed face in my robe.

I shrank back as if Muret were accusing me. A hundred hideous nights on the boulevard seemed to leer one by one at me as if they had entities of their own. Again I was walking through the rain on Boulevard St. Michel

receiving the bitter humiliation that comes to all beggars. But Roger's assuring look dispersed the shadows. I was with him, and the horror had gone, even if little Antoine's —

"Come with me, Deary," I said huskily. "Your mother is a very good woman, I'm sure; so don't cry any more."

We did not speak when the washing process was going on; but when it was finished I kissed him with a whispered assurance that I loved him, and led him back.

Darling little Antoine! I'm fonder of him than ever!

When we reached the drawing-room, Roger came forward, leading Muret. For a moment Antoine looked at the boy distrustfully; but Muret held out his hand.

"I was a pig, Antoine," he apologized, and then added, "You needn't mind about your mother: my father's in jail!"

Antoine's face lightened as he grasped his opponent's hand, and in spite of the gravity of the situation Roger allowed a smile to curve the corners of his lips. But he was solemn enough when he turned to me.

"We're all going to have a nice time. I'll tell you, Mademoiselle Teacher, what I've been saying to the boys. I wanted them to understand how good you are to give them this evening in your own home, and that they must make it agreeable for you by being well behaved and kindly."

Each little voice piped an assurance, and afterward I noticed that Muret and Antoine were on the best of terms. They had found a bond of union in the sorrows of their young years. It was a clean and radiant Antoine and a strong and subdued Muret who, scarcely leaving my side, helped with the younger children like the devoted aides-de-camp they were.

After their feast, I sang to the boys, at Bruce's re-

quest. Glad tears rose to my eyes, and once Roger came to the piano and looked queerly at me; but I sang on, for I was not ashamed of my emotion. When my little people went away, I gave them all a flower, and Mrs. Everard, Roger, Bruce, and Maxey, among them, gave each child a five-franc piece.

"I'm going to take a walk before I sleep," commented Bruce ruefully. "I couldn't have believed it would take such a lot of energy to entertain a few youngsters. Let's blow off the excitement, Max."

"I'm tired too," confessed Mrs. Everard to me; "so I'll be selfish and leave you and Roger to the clearing up. It was a charming evening, Phyllis dear. I've never heard you sing better. Good night, my baby," and she stood on tiptoe to kiss her tall son.

The door closed upon her, and I was alone with Roger. He took me tenderly in his arms. I was content.

"Phyllis, Phyllis!" he murmured. "I'm so conscience-stricken!"

I put my hand over his lips, and, trembled to his heart, remained silent for a long time.

CHAPTER XXII

ROGER has been trying to persuade Mrs. Everard and me to go to Switzerland for some weeks. However, all the coaxing in the world won't take me away from Paris. I can't leave him. Although I've made a brave pretense to terminate my visit here, I met with such storms of opposition from everyone that I decided to stay awhile longer. Really, Mrs. Everard does need me; but my money is dwindling week by week, although I've clung to every sou.

My desire is greater every day that Roger should ask me to marry him. Bruce says that if anyone wishes for a thing hard enough, he'll get it. He says, too, that one can't get away from his own; that the best will come sometime. Oh, how strongly I'm wishing for my best!

Writing of Bruce reminds me that he has just brought me some more flowers. Their fragrance fills the whole room. I honestly think that Bruce Stewart is — is the best man in the world: not because he brings me flowers, and Roger forgets to — no, it isn't anything so petty as that. He's noble, strong, and most thrilling when he is pushing an argument against Roger's idea for perpetual — after the earth — Hell. I believe the same as Bruce does. I cling to his words that God is good, splendid, in His sweeping love for us all — even a sinner like me!

. . . . . .

Today is the fourteenth of July, the greatest fête day in France. And the people are busy decorating the city for the evening's amusement. Roger has asked me to go across the river tonight to watch the fireworks.

Mrs. Everard was to have come with us; but feared it would tax her strength too much, and she decided to stay home. I must stop writing; for we start soon.

. . . . . .

I can't decide whether I can live longer or not.

Late yesterday afternoon, Roger and I went to the Continental Hotel on the Rue de Castiglione for dinner. We sat in silence; for he was pale and distrait, while I was so unhappy that I couldn't eat, much less talk.

Instinct must have told him how badly I felt; for we did not linger over our coffee, but went out immediately into the Bois, where boys and girls were flinging flowers and confetti at one another in high glee. Temporary music stands had been erected at every second corner; for the fourteenth of July is the one day in the year when the French people cluster about to jubilate on the asphalt pavement. Lanterns were hung from the Place de la Concorde to the end of the Bois, making it seem that the daylight had been caught and confined in transparent prisons. The whole city was as splendid as a jeweled princess; and, if Paris had been viewed from an airship, the thousands of colored lights strung through every avenue and boulevard would have looked like a million rainbows arranged symmetrically side by side. In the woods, also, every tree bore its burden of brilliant light, and if I hadn't been so miserable my soul would have delighted in the feast of color.

Until eleven o'clock, we drove up and down through one festival after another; then Roger ordered the cabman to drive home.

When we neared Pont Neuf, which spans the river Seine, we found drawn up in scarlet array several lines of guardians of the peace.

One of them stepped forward to our carriage. "You cannot pass here, Monsieur," said he.

"Rubbish! It can't be closed for the night! We must pass: we live in the Latin quarter," Roger said in decisive tones.

The officer shrugged his shoulders, and one of his companions laughed.

"The bridge will not be clear tonight," shouted another.

We attempted farther down the Seine to cross two more bridges, with the same result. At last, muttering something, Roger ordered the cabman to return to the Avenue de l'Opéra.

"Now, then, what are we going to do?" he demanded.

"I don't know," I replied helplessly.

We halted on the corner near the Café de la Paix. I caught sight of the boy imitating Napoleon; but his chatter was drowned in the noise.

"Phyllis, we simply can't get home tonight!"

Roger flung himself back in the seat grimly. I could not have spoken, even if my life had depended upon it.

. . . . . .

The few moments I spent waiting for Roger at the hotel while he made arrangements in the office, are unforgettable. I could hear the fiacres dash up, stop, empty their occupants hastily, and then drive away again. Motors whizzed madly past, hooting hoarsely amid the constant shuffling of feet on the pavements. Scraps of conversation in rapid French drifted in from the hall, and there was a constant coming and going.

Too restless to sit still, I wandered from window to window, until I heard Roger coming through the corridor. He almost carried me to the lift. As he closed the door behind us, he said:

"I had to register you as my wife; but — but I have a suite."

His voice was cold, and he did not bend to kiss me as

he had done so many times at home, but proceeded to take off my wraps, hanging them with his own on the rack. I wish he had beat me — I should have adored any masterful outburst, even to pain, rather than that polite, insufferable nicety. I hate it — I hate it! For fully five minutes we had not uttered a word, when all at once he broke out:

"Phyllis, I would have given half I'm worth not to have been forced to bring you here tonight; but you understand there was no other way."

"Yes," I answered, trying to be calm. His pallor frightened a feverish exclamation from me. "Roger, Roger, why are you so unhappy and — and so different?"

I couldn't help asking this question. I was opening up a way to tell him my secret. How I craved to hear him ask me to marry him!

"Because," he said, stopping in front of me, "you're too good, much too good, Dear, to have things like this happen to you. When I think of your future, I feel like cursing myself."

"I don't want to think of my future," I put in coldly.

"But you must, Child, you must! You will go into the world with that voice of yours — that generous temperament — God! what I have suffered since that — night! Everything seems awful to me!"

Did this mean that I should go again into the world without him? Why, I can't go! I can't go! I must have him! Paralyzed with fear, I shrank farther and farther into the armchair.

"Phyllis," he went on, "Phyllis, can you forgive me for bringing you here?"

"Don't speak of it, please don't. There is nothing to forgive. I am here with you, and I am quite satisfied."

He bounded forward and lifted my face to his. "I

swear upon my eternal salvation that I will protect you from yourself! I've made a resolution never to — to —"

I stopped him with a motion of my hand. To protect me from myself! Oh, that I had been protected from him! "It is too late for your resolutions," I said dully.

He misunderstood me, and cried out sharply, "No, it isn't, Phyllis! No, it isn't! If you will make me *that* promise over again, I shall live with peace in my mind. You are going to be a great woman some day, and I shall be proud of you. But just now, little girl, I am too contrite to think of anything but what we've done."

My heart stood still, and I thought all the good in me was dead. He feared only that he had spoiled my career! At that moment my career and my future sank into insignificance. A tear rolled down each of my cheeks. I wonder what he thought of me when I dropped down and began to sob. He was standing on the other side of the room in silence. Suddenly I got up; but made no move toward him.

"Will you leave me now?" I stammered. "I want to go to sleep, please."

He turned and was gone before I could say another word. For a few moments I heard him moving about; then followed a deathlike silence from his room.

I don't know when I fell asleep; but the first thing I heard was Roger knocking and telling me it was nine o'clock.

CHAPTER XXIII

I HAVEN'T written for several days. Of late I have had headaches. I told Marquise that I had a cold, and couldn't sing for a time; so I've stopped taking lessons.

Oh, if Roger wouldn't wear that harassed look! His conscience must torture him almost as much as something else does me. I've discovered that women are different from men in many vital ways. When I was in the boulevards, my conscience used to tear me to pieces. Now it's only the insistent demands of my heart I desire satisfied. I don't want Roger to talk of drifting, of high morals, and of women who would give their lives for their honor. There may be such women, there must be many who had rather die than love as I have; but if any living woman loves a man like Roger Everard — then, I say, God pity her!

And I wish, too, that he were never preoccupied when he is with me. I feel as jealous of his preoccupation as if it were another woman.

Bruce surprised me yesterday by bringing me another bunch of flowers, and when he handed them to me he said, as if to excuse himself, "I bought them of a poor woman because she had a host of young kids with her."

Darling giant! He's so dear, always!

The flowers brought about a discussion at the table.

"Hello! Where did the roses come from? By Jove! they are sweet!" Roger leaned over and sniffed at them.

Bruce looked up from his paper. "I brought them," he answered. "I met a woman with a baby and some

other children at her skirts. She looked as if she needed the sous." He shot a half-humorous glance at me.

Roger chuckled. "So you've taken up with philanthropy, Stewart!" he remarked. "I thought you were against helping beggars."

"A woman selling flowers isn't a beggar," replied Bruce lamely. "And she had a lot of children."

"Yet you must remember, Bruce, what you've so often said about women who drag kids about with them."

This from Maxey, and Mrs. Everard exclaimed with some indignation:

"And why, Dear, should Mr. Stewart object to a woman with babies taking money from strangers?"

Bruce was silent. His face changed color, and a suspicion of a frown came on his brow. I thought his glance at me was almost appealing. Before I could speak, Maxey broke in:

"I think you would object too, Mrs. Everard, if you knew that there are establishments in Paris where they maim children and then hire them out to these women. I mean that they put out their eyes and amputate legs and arms."

"How horrible!" ejaculated Mrs. Everard, and Roger added:

"You can't imagine, Mother, what a stock in trade a crippled child is to a beggar."

A vision of Casperone flashed into my mind. I could see the fat man's woman loom out from the crimson of Bruce's roses, and again there came a wave of pity for the strange baby strapped to the board. My face whitened, and I exclaimed:

"Oh, don't talk about such things, please!"

Seeing his mother's agitation and mine, Roger changed the subject quickly. The men moved from the table, and Bruce drew on his overcoat. I brushed his sleeve with my

fingers, and picked a piece of obstinate lint from it carefully.

"I thank you for the flowers, Bruce," I said softly, "and I appreciate them."

For just an instant I saw a strange light flash in his eyes as he turned from me. He paused as if he were going to speak, and then went out, slamming the door.

. . . . . .

I've been deeply touched by Bruce's continued offering of roses. It's strange how tender we feel when somebody, who is not habituated to do graceful things, suddenly remembers to do them. He brings flowers every day now. The mother with the babies must be very glad to get the sous.

Lately I have been trying to analyze my feeling toward Bruce. It's very difficult to compare it with my love for Roger — and not to one soul in the world would I confess what I'm about to write. There are times, when I'm with Roger, and my nerves tingle my blood till it boils, that I am persuaded of his superior goodness; but here in cold decision I write that I'm the wickedest girl in the wide world, and Roger is wicked, too, but Bruce is the noblest of God's created beings. As I read back a bit, I've a notion to put my pen through what I have just written. No! I won't, because every word is true!

There are not so many discussions as there used to be, especially for and against marriage. I am grateful for that. There's something torturing in such arguments to me.

. . . . . .

Roger and I have had many talks lately; but they always end by leaving a sting in my heart.

"Phyllis," he asked one evening, "how are you getting on with your lessons? I haven't heard you sing for an age."

The question came so quickly that the truth flew to my lips. "I haven't taken a lesson for a long time. I haven't felt very well."

If he had only said something different to me that evening, he could have made me so — so much — less — afraid.

"You're not ill?" he broke in on my rushing thoughts.

"No, it's a cold. Marquise told me to wait a little while."

This only half satisfied him. "Phyllis, I wouldn't do anything to stand in your way, to hinder your advancement in a career, for anything in the world, and I feel as if I were an obstacle."

"Why, Roger?"

"Well, a person can't be so wholly absorbed in another without losing interest in work. You spend too much time in doing things for me."

As if that were possible! I wish my heart had the power to beat for him a hundred times faster than it does!

"I take care of Maxey's and of Bruce's clothes as I do of yours," I whispered. "They haven't the slightest suspicion."

"I don't think they have," was his reply. "Still, my conscience hurts me, Phyllis."

Another thing I've discovered, too. A man's conscience attacks him only when he wants it to. A woman's heart never stops hurting.

I was on his knee as he spoke; but he didn't try to place me back in the chair. He only held me close, and I heard his breath come quickly.

"But for your sake, Phyllis," he began, "your whole future —"

"My whole future depends upon you, Roger," I interrupted. "I can be nothing, I care for nothing, but you.

If you think my love is wicked, I'm sorry. To me, it's the highest, holiest, and the best the world can give."

Something that lives with me always made me say that — and I'm not able yet to decide whether or not it is true.

Roger sighed and pressed me closer. I drew his head down and kissed his lips.

Oh, dear! I wish it were the fashion for women to propose marriage! I'd — I'd go and wake him up right now, and — and — Precious God! I'm so afraid that I hang to each minute, hating the falling of the twilight hours!

. . . . . .

When Bruce Stewart suggested a family trip to Fontainebleau, Roger said that he must spend the day in his studio, and insisted that I go alone with Bruce. It was decided that the journey would be too fatiguing for Mrs. Everard, and Max had something else to do.

I had rather have stayed at home than go without Roger. Of late I've been so miserable that excursions of any sort are not alluring. But one can't complain of illness in some circumstances.

We started very early in the morning, so as to be able to return before nightfall. I wonder Bruce was not displeased with me; for all the way out on the train I was so moody and distraught that I am positive he noticed it. However, he was unusually tender and solicitous.

There's one thing: I never see Bruce that I don't hugely admire his immaculate dress, big body, and wonderful face. He's a perfect study in human anatomy.

"This is a trip I've wanted to take with you ever since you came to our home. Last summer I stayed three weeks in the forest," said he, when piloting me among the famous old pictures and galleries. "Weren't you glad to come, Phyllis?"

"Indeed, yes," I hastened to reply. "It was kind of you, Bruce, to ask me."

After that, he explained the wonders of the palaces and the one hundred and one things pertaining to royalty. It may not be democratic and American, but I'm always interested in kings and queens, especially dead ones.

We had dinner in a small, out-of-the-way café.

Bruce asked me not to drink any of the red or white wine. "It's adulterated in these places," he explained, and, lifting his eyes, smiled as he finished, "I don't want you to drink any kind of wine at any time, either."

This surprised me to such an extent that I couldn't find any answer, nor did he speak to me until we had climbed into the rickety old wagon and were far up the Fontainebleau forest-road.

I've never seen such trees, and I recall perfectly that I spoke first to Bruce, looking up at him at the same time. His deathly pallor made me catch my breath, and I forgot my request that he explain the origin of the white roads and snuggling monasteries.

"Bruce, don't you feel well?" I gasped, turning squarely upon him. "You're awfully white."

He shook visibly, ignored my allusion to his sudden distress, and said, "Most of the monasteries are empty at present. The monks are gone."

The uncommonness of his nervousness struck me. His was such a calm nature; at least, I had always counted it so. After that, I was disinclined to talk, and we were both silent until the *cocher* drew up to the roadside.

In patois he explained that most tourists descended here, and that by walking up the hill a bit, and through a narrow path where a horse could not draw a cab, we might take a view of the wonderful gorges and the forest beyond. As the man settled back in his cab, he shot a warning after us.

"Keep to the paths, Monsieur. The snakes are plenty and dangerous."

And there, from our position among the great white boulders, we silently watched numbers of serpents trail their beautiful bodies from the crevices and stretch their lengths over the rocks.

"I wish I could touch one!" I said softly. "I used to play with them when I was a child. They're so beautiful!"

This didn't surprise Bruce at all. Roger would have jumped out of his skin at such a remark from me. I bring to mind once when he and I were together in the Luxembourg Gardens, how he trod upon a harmless garden snake, crushing its head flat under his heel. Of course I cried out against the injustice of it, and Roger, flaming in anger, said:

"Phyllis, have some sense of the fitness of things! It has been proved biblically that the serpent has been and always will be the worst enemy of your sex. You haven't forgotten the story of Eden?"

And I replied, "No, not forgotten it; but I have never believed it."

Roger didn't speak to me during that walk home. In the evening, to dispel his frown, I whispered that I did believe the Genesis story of Eve and her tempter.

I couldn't help but note the thoughtful expression with which Bruce surveyed the reptiles, brilliant in varied coloring in the sun.

"Yes, they are beautiful," he said, turning to me. "Every move they make is graceful."

"And yet they're the most despised of all creation," I put in, "and never, while I live, shall I understand it."

"Because it is not true," replied Bruce. "Man's egotism, his desire to find somebody or something to throw his

shortcomings upon, has brought that foolish story into life. It's rubbish!"

"I hope that it is," I answered meditatively.

We had walked about half a mile when I wheeled on Bruce Stewart. "Bruce," I demanded, "do you think Roger really believes that women are inferior to men?"

He sounded a grim grunt that didn't seem to class with his handsome mouth and glittering teeth. "Roger's an ass about some things," he drawled, and that was all the answer I received.

Then, as suddenly as I had broken in upon his thoughts a few moments before, Bruce interrupted mine. "Phyllis," he said, "will you marry me?"

I flashed a frightened glance into his strange, compelling eyes, now drowsy with inexplicable questioning. His wonderful ruddy skin had pallored in passion. Suddenly he came close to me and laid a hand upon my shoulder.

"Phyllis!" he whispered, and then again, "Little Phyllis!"

Still, I could not speak; a mental tumult rushed the blood through my heart at such a rate that I couldn't breathe. Of a sudden, I realized my awful position, and shook off his hand.

"Of course I won't marry you, Bruce. I can't! It's absolutely impossible! Take me back to the cab."

As we walked slowly back in silence, I stole a glance at the big man, gray-faced in disappointment. I wished I were a man, too. If I had been, I should have slipped my hand through his arm and have told him all the burning ambitions of my life: as it is, every aspiration in me is shrouded in its grave — buried by Roger.

At the end of the broken stony path, Bruce paused. "Phyllis," he faltered, "I had hoped you might love me

enough to marry me; but, if you can't, will you remember — oh, dear girl, will you remember that if you need me I shall always be your friend? No matter what comes, I shall be ready."

I could only nod my head, and as we clattered through the forest neither one of us spoke another word.

I remember that I dreamed that night of Bruce, and woke at dawn, happy and smiling, only to drop back in wide-eyed horror when full consciousness came in all its hideous truth.

. . . . . .

Today I went to the priest in Rue Kleber. His name is Father Beulais. I had to go: the need of comfort from another human being, of unburdening myself to one person at least, was crying within me.

He met me with the same expression of melancholy and sweetness that I had observed before. "I knew that you would come," he said softly. "It's cooler than yesterday, isn't it? The days we've had lately are wonderful! Won't you sit down — here?"

I was tired; for now every little exertion took away my breath. I had lost my youthfulness and vivacity.

"I felt you would need me," he said presently, after an embarrassing pause; "for, after the many times I had seen you burning candles, I reasoned that you were unhappy. That's why I spoke to you."

"Yes, I am unhappy," I replied. "And I'm going to tell you about it."

"Very well," he answered simply, bringing the tips of his fingers together.

"I have a lover," I began in a low tone.

The clear eyes in the high-bred face did not waver. "I imagined as much," he replied.

"I love him."

"Of course."

"And I want to marry him."

"Naturally."

I looked into his face pleadingly. He wasn't helping me at all.

"I don't know what you need," said he. "You will have to tell me just as if I were a physician and you were ill."

The blood rushed to my temples, leaving a dead ache and a desire that something would happen that would take away the tugging at my heart.

"He is very good," I put in quickly, "very good, indeed. He doesn't see matters as I do, that's all, or if he does he hasn't said so."

"You mean he hasn't asked you to marry him?"

I nodded.

"Do you think he is going to?"

"I don't know," I answered, with a sob in my throat. "I had thought so, and prayed for it, night and day. It was for that that I burned the candles lately; but he says nothing."

"Maybe our Holy Mother has decided that you are better off without him."

"I've got to have him!" I cried sharply. "I will have him! She couldn't be so cruel! As a woman herself, she must see that I need him!"

"I understand," said the priest thoughtfully. "I thought it was that. Sit up and cease crying. It will make you ill. There! I want to question you. Does — does he love you?"

I recalled Roger's first long, passionate kiss. "Oh, I thought he did," I said miserably. "Yes, I'm sure he does."

"How do you know? Has he ever told you?"

I was about to give the affirmative nod, when I suddenly received a shock. Roger had told me that I was beautiful,

that I was his darling; but had he once told me that he really loved me?

"He's shown it in a thousand different ways," was all I could answer.

"You've seen him every day since you burned candles?" he questioned in a delicate and meaning voice.

"We live in the same house," I replied in a low tone.

Father Beulais rose to his feet. He was white, painfully white. He had heard something that hurt his finer susceptibilities. "And he has never told you that he loved you?"

"Not in those words," I said bravely; "but, Father, can't you understand? He does, he does — I know it!" I poured into his ear evidences of Roger's affection. I tried to prove to him how impossible it was that he didn't love me.

"Then why hasn't he married you?" demanded the priest. "You're mistaken," he continued, reseating himself. "A man is not like a woman — there's a great difference. Men do not love like women."

"I am sure he cares as much for me as I do for him," I insisted stubbornly.

"He may love someone else," was his merciless reply.

"Some — one — else?"

I drew back, keeping my eyes fixed upon him. Lady Jane flashed for an instant into my mind, and I drew a long, sobbing breath.

"I heard him tell another woman once that he had his ideal," I admitted, and before I could establish in the priest's mind the belief that I was the woman he had interposed:

"So he has his ideal! Nearly all men have; but she's always a *good* woman."

"Oh, Father Beulais!"

He raised a warning finger to ward off an interruption.

"If, as you say, he is the first man you have ever loved," he went on relentlessly, "he ought to feel a certain responsibility toward you that he seems to have missed."

"But he does feel it; for he is always telling me that he is concerned about me."

"And how do you answer him?"

"I tell him I'm as happy as I can be; but it is only bravado."

Father Beulais bent his flashing dark eyes upon me. "Then I have told you the truth," said he. "If he loved you, he would take you to the priest instead of preaching morals, especially if he knew —"

"But he doesn't know," I interrupted.

Suddenly the priest wheeled upon me. "You've got to tell him! It's the only way he'll ever be your husband."

"I've wanted him to ask me to be his wife before knowing — that."

The man was pacing back and forth over the polished boards. "Has he ever spoken of another woman?"

"No," I replied faintly.

"Poor little girl!" murmured Father Beulais, taking another turn.

I sat awhile in silence, feeling a sort of dumb faith that in this holy place some quietude would come to my turbulent spirit.

"You must tell him — you must tell him about it!" commanded the priest presently. "If he is the man you think him to be, his pity will be aroused, at least. Our Lady will put it into his heart; for is she not the Mother of Sorrows — the *Mater Dolorosa*?"

. . . . . .

I walked home dazed and unhappy. And now I am waiting for the call for dinner. I can never bring myself to tell Roger *that!* This very evening I'm going to try

and make him ask me to marry him. I will hear in so many words whether he does or does not love me. If he will tell me that he does, my happiness will be complete. If not — but I won't think it — I can't — I can't!

. . . . . .

After we had finished eating, Bruce and Maxey went out. Roger stayed at home with me. Before I could gather courage, he had picked up a new book of fiction and was soon deeply engrossed. At times like this, or when he is abstractedly silent, I am loath to disturb him; but I simply couldn't go to sleep unless he relieved my heart somewhat.

"Roger," I said, softly touching his hair, "won't you put down your book for a minute?"

"I'm in the most exciting part," he mumbled; but he laid the book on the table, and took my hand in his. The touch warmed and thrilled me.

"What is it, Dearest?"

I placed my eyes on a direct line with his so that he could not avoid me. "Roger," I pleaded, "are you — really — really fond of me?"

He had not expected the question. He drew me forcibly to his knee and, putting his arm about me, looked long into my face. "Am I fond of you?" he asked. "Am I fond of you? You have become indispensable to me, Phyllis."

"I mean, Roger, more than you were when I came here? Do you love me as — a man — ought to — love — a good woman?"

We were at the crucial point.

"A good woman!" he repeated, and then paused.

I uttered a cry and dropped my head on his shoulder, and there, tired, sick, and overcome, wept my heart out as I never had before.

Roger allowed me to weep; but at length he broke out,

"You see, Phyllis, I might as well be honest: no good ever comes to two people through a lie. We started out wrong. I shall regret it all my life. That you are not dear to me, I can't say. But that's no reason why I should accept sacrifices that I know you are making for me. I should be a brute. Phyllis, I don't believe you ever think of your career, where I'm concerned!"

The others, returning, interrupted us, and I had not received my answer.

. . . . . .

I listen to every sentence of Roger's with such eagerness that my intensity often makes me cry. Then I twist and turn his words to make them mean something comforting for me.

Today, Mrs. Everard has gone to stay with a friend outside Paris. As I was making ready for bed tonight, the murmur of voices came in through the curtains.

"Where's Phyllis?" asked Bruce.

"She was tired and has gone to bed," replied Roger. From his tone I don't believe he raised his eyes from his paper.

"She must have been very tired to go to bed at this hour," said Maxey.

"Perhaps," was all Roger said.

He was terse and noncommittal. I could not have spoken of him in such a manner.

After a time of silence, Maxey blurted out, "I say, Roger, do you know the man in America whom Phyllis is fond of? You ought to know something about her: you knew her before we did."

"Why do you want to know, Kid?" was Roger's lazy reply.

Another silence.

"Because," and I heard Maxey walking up and down the room, "I'd give anything to marry her myself. But

she said she couldn't: there was someone else in America."

I listened with every nerve strained. Would Roger stand up for me and tell the other two what he hadn't told me,— that he loved me?

There was a pause before the next words came, and then Maxey said:

"She's the only girl I could ever care for. She'd be the making of me. Confound that other chap!"

"I thought you were never going to get married, Maxey?" broke in Roger. I detected a huskiness in his voice.

"Oh, I've said so," went on the boy; "but I was a fool, a bally fool. Phyllis wouldn't be doing badly in marrying me. I shall have pots of money one day, and a title, and most girls like that sort of thing."

I waited in vain for Roger to speak.

"You've asked her, you say?" This was from Bruce. There was a tone of curiosity, almost amusement, in his voice.

"Yes, I did," replied the boy shortly. "She said she was fond of the other fellow."

"Then take her word for it," snapped Roger, and I could hear him nervously turning the pages of his book.

No one spoke after that. Maxey went to the piano and began to pound out a popular love ditty.

I'm wondering, in a dreary way, if all men are alike as far as women are concerned? But then there is Bruce! I'm thinking specifically about him.

CHAPTER XXIV

I WAITED yesterday for the opportunity to get a word alone with Roger. It came after luncheon when the others had gone out and I was arranging some flowers.

"Roger," I said, "do you want to see me married to Maxey?"

I had to fuss among Bruce's flowers a long time before Roger blurted out:

"No! Of course not!"

His denial comforted me a little. I came to him and sat on his knee.

"Dearest," I pleaded, forcing him to look at me, "do you respect me?"

He started and made a movement to put me down.

"I want you to tell me," I insisted, hanging to his neck.

"Don't ask questions," he answered, with a ghost of a smile.

"But, Roger, it is so much to me! I want to know if — if you respect me."

He knocked an ash from his cigar. "Well, I hardly know what you mean. If you want to know whether I should miss you, whether I need you, I've told you that before. If you think you could go out of my life and not have me care, you're mistaken. You can't talk of respect in connection with a woman who is as near to me as you are. One respects a woman who is on a pedestal; not —"

"Not a woman who has flung herself at your feet!" I cried bitterly.

I detected an expression that men bear when they dread a scene. I jumped up quickly, biting my lip to keep back the tears. I could hear Roger fidgeting under my silence, and finally he got up and said:

"Well, Phyllis, I'm going out."

He hesitated an instant; but, as I neither spoke nor turned my head, he went out of the door and closed it behind him. The perfume of Bruce's roses accentuated my aching sense of desolation.

. . . . . .

I've been again to see Father Beulais.

"I've expected you every day," he remarked quietly as he bade me sit down. "Are you any more at rest?"

I shook my head.

"Poor child! Life is hard for you — just now. Did you take my advice and tell him?"

"No," I choked, "it was too much like asking him to marry me. I can't do that."

"You should have done so," observed the priest, wrinkling his fine brow. "He has sinned: he must atone for it."

"I don't want him to atone for it — if atoning means that he must sacrifice himself for me. I want him to marry me because of myself, because he wants me to be his wife."

"Yes, I see; but the child is the instrument through which he will be yours. Men are not utterly devoid of heart. Besides, you've a responsibility toward another soul now."

I trembled until he gave me a drink of brandy, which I gulped down thankfully.

"I can think of nothing so awful in this world," he said deliberately as he took the glass from my hand, "as for a mother to receive the reproaches of a child brought into the world without a name."

I covered my eyes to shut out the picture. "I never thought of it quite like that," I returned brokenly.

To this moment I had been thinking of my own contentment. The priest had given me another thought.

Father Beulais looked at me long and fixedly, and then sighed as he paced restlessly up and down the room. "I think you are suffering without cause," he continued. "Go to him — tell him," and he looked at me keenly, "that you will be the mother of his child in —"

"Five months," I breathed.

"He will see things in a new light. Would you marry him then?"

"No!" I said, standing up. "No, not so long as the world has a sun and a moon! I could marry him only if he needed me, not when I need him. He shall never save me from disgrace out of pity! If I were well and happy, and he asked me, it would be different."

"What are you going to do about the child?" asked the priest gravely.

"Love it — shelter it — and — oh, oh, work for it!"

"Do you think that your love can make up for what it will lose,— a poor, petty love in exchange for a name and — Heaven?"

"Heaven!" I cried. "I shall never do anything to keep my child out of Heaven."

"You already have," said he, "and that is how you women make mistakes. You should be wholly at the mercy of this man — God willed it! Your child is his — and his name should be yours. Without his aid, your child will never see the light of God's face!"

I looked at him stunned. Would the fact that Roger and I became man and wife place a heavenly crown upon the head of my child? I turned upon the priest abruptly.

"Oh, I don't understand you."

"No, of course not: it is difficult."

He took a book from the shelf and ran over the pages till he came to a passage which he marked with his thumb. I read the words with blurred eyes. Several times I brushed the tears away with my handkerchief.

"Then — if — my child is born out of — wedlock —"

He nodded and pointed to the book, and I read on and on.

"Then every child's eternal welfare in the world," I said, laying the Bible on the table, "really depends upon its father. A man can give it light — or darkness!"

"Yes: hence the superiority of men. Woman in the beginning was responsible for all sin, and in the endless ages through which this world must revolve she has to suffer for it. You are no exception to the rule."

"Does — does the child suffer in being kept out of Heaven?" I asked dully.

"Not any more than any soul would when debarred from the light of God's countenance."

"Is there any penance I can do that will save it?"

"None."

I drew a long breath. I'm so mixed up in religious ideas! I'm like a leaf turning to every wind of doctrine — for what? The priest spoke again solemnly.

"If it lives and breathes without a name, then as surely as you sit there, as surely as that small bird on the branch of yonder tree breathes, sings, and fulfils the destiny that God intended it should, just so surely will that child never —"

I lost his last words. My eyes wandered to the little bird. It swung to and fro on the slender twig, twittering happily to its mate on the limb above. They needed nothing but the pure air, the open sky, the love of life,— aye, life itself,— to fulfill their instincts.

The priest divined the drift of my thought. "They were made for the gratification of man, like all inferior

creation," he observed. "We are of a race apart. God must have intelligent beings to worship him — He will have no stain upon His angelic host. When souls have been purified by the Church, they are ready for His presence. You understand? Your child would not be fit for *that* presence!"

"Is it possible that a just God could bar an innocent soul from Heaven for a sin it never committed?"

The priest lifted one hand and glanced at me forbiddingly. "The ways of the Almighty are inscrutable," said he.

"You say that if it lives and breathes," I brought out, after a moment. "Suppose it never — lives? What — if — I — were — to — kill — myself — now?"

A look of horror spread over his face. He clutched at the beads hanging to his side and began to say them over hastily. I heard "Hail Mary" several times; but I took no interest in the prayers.

With misty eyes, I watched the two little birds chirping to each other in innocent coquetry, fluttering from branch to branch. Then I realized that the priest had sat down beside me. As he took my hand, I saw how pale he had become.

"You would not dare!" he muttered.

"But if the child doesn't live, it can't be deprived of light. What good to give it life, hope, and love, and then consign it to darkness?" I asked bitterly.

"The man can save you both, if you will but yield a little."

"He doesn't want me," I sobbed. "Oh, he doesn't want me!"

"Pride!" he said again, bending compelling eyes upon me to force me to listen to his reasoning. "That is nothing but pride."

"I had rather die a hundred times over," I said stub-

bornly. "I would! I would! I can't tell him about it!"

The priest spread out his hands, looked into the palms, and straightened out his long fingers. "Will you permit me to tell him?" he asked after a pause. "Oh, I shall help you," he went on with growing eagerness, "and relieve you if I can. You will allow me to tell him, won't you?"

I was suddenly conscious that I could not discuss it a moment longer, and rose to my feet.

"I do thank you, Father Beulais," I exclaimed, extending my hand, "and — and I will think it over."

What mattered the little prevarication compared with what I intended to do? He himself had unconsciously pointed out the only way of escape for me. Physical death was a little thing compared to the mental agony I was enduring.

. . . . . .

I wondered as I wearily entered our little flat whether Roger would care when he heard what I had done. He was alone when I arrived.

Boyishly he grasped my hands. "Phyllis, I was beginning to worry about you. Where in the world have you been? You look tired, Child!"

He little knew the feelings that dominated me. I had resolved to take this step into the dark, and his conscience should suffer no more on my behalf. He lifted my head, kissed me, and smiled.

"I see," he said, laughing a little ruefully, "that Bruce has sent you in some more flowers. I'll soon be jealous of him. He likes you immensely, Phyllis. After dinner I have something to tell you," he added.

I took the roses up and buried my nose in them. As Donna came in and began to lay the cloth, I rushed to my room, not trusting myself to speak.

At dinner I toyed with my food, sending the plate away untouched. Bruce noticed it, and rebuked me by a silent glance. He will make a capital husband for some girl who wants to be cared for in that sweet, quiet way of his.

Roger's mother, who had just returned from her brief absence, was so absorbed in recounting the incidents of her visit to her son that she also ate very little. Roger devoted himself to her.

Maxey turned to me sullenly. "I'm going to England, Phyllis," he said, "to see my people. The mater wants me."

I wondered involuntarily what he would say if he were going to see his real mother.

"What, Max?" exclaimed Roger. "Are you going to break up the faithful three?"

"I can't stay here any longer. What's the use? I hate Paris, anyway!"

"I thought you were devoted to it," drawled Bruce.

"I'm tired of it now," said Max, looking at me as much as to say, "It's all your fault."

I'm afraid I paid little attention to his accusing glance.

"Oh, Maxey," cried Mrs. Everard, "don't go until I'm ready! I do want to visit our friends there, and you know how I dread traveling alone. I sha'n't be able to stay here forever."

"Forever wouldn't be long enough for me to be with you, Mater mine," Roger murmured. "Besides, I have a very special reason for wanting you to stay, and Max too. I may go with you."

Something curious in the glance he threw me, half furtive, half pleading, gave me a sensation of foreboding. What could his reason be? He had kept it a secret from me. I've felt shut out of his counsel lately. There came over me a realization that there might be no next week,

so far as I was concerned. I left the table with an excuse, and when Roger asked me where I was going I said:

"To the pharmacy."

"Let me go with you," he called; but I replied:

"No, I had rather go alone."

CHAPTER XXV

WHEN I returned from the chemist's, I noticed that Roger's mother glanced quickly at me as I passed through the *salon* to my own room. As I gained it, I saw that she had followed me in. I hastily concealed the little vial I held in my fingers.

"Phyllis dear, I hope you won't think I'm intruding," she said in a low voice; "but you look ill and unhappy. Won't you confide in me?"

She sat down beside me on the bed, and in sheer loneliness of spirit I let my head fall upon her shoulder.

"There now, cry, cry! It'll do you good, Child," she whispered.

I could no more have stopped the rush of tears than I could have turned the River Seine from its course with my hands.

During the silence that followed, Maxey's voice, as he read from the evening paper, floated in through the portière.

"Last night at ten o'clock a terrible tragedy occurred," he drawled in a singsong tone. "A young workwoman abandoned by her lover was found dead in the river—" Maxey's voice grew indistinct.

I listened mechanically, Mrs. Everard stroking my hair with motherly tenderness.

"Poor thing!" commented Max, raising his tones again. "I suppose the prospect of disgrace unhinged her mind."

"She sinned without counting the cost," Roger's voice said. "It's a pity that women will do that."

I thought I felt the hand on my head tremble for an instant and stay its caressing motion.

"By the way you talk, Roger," put in Bruce, "one would think that the girl did all the sinning."

"It's expected of a woman to be purer than a man," Roger broke forth impatiently. "She's not expected to yield to temptation. If she does, it's one of the Creator's laws that she must take the consequences. As I've said before, that was intended from the beginning."

"Good God!" exclaimed Bruce, moving his chair backward. "That's not fair nor just. For instance, a girl may be young, or she may love a man devotedly."

"Nevertheless," replied Roger obstinately, "the woman's mission is to uphold purity. It has never been asked of the man. In my opinion, and I know that many conservative fellows think the same way, the woman is responsible for the man's fallen position in the world."

"Hell!" snapped Bruce.

The dropping of a pin could have been heard in the stillness. Presently Roger broke forth:

"They've certainly placed us in direct disharmony with the peace that God intended for us, Bruce. Don't be a fool and argue for the equality of the sexes. It's ridiculous! No wonder that all good men kill the serpent and ostracize the woman who — who dares! By her own indiscretion, woman has become absolutely subservient to man."

There was dead silence for a moment, followed by an oath from Bruce and an indignant exclamation from Max.

"I don't care what you say, Roddy," cried the latter in a high, boyish voice, "if a woman suffers, the man oughtn't to go scot free."

A faintness crept over me as I listened. And Roger was the man into whose arms I had gone with such faith!

This night has taught me all of man's arrogance. I've felt his grinding heel upon my head, and here in secret I rebelliously proclaim man master of the world. It would be an absolute physical impossibility for a woman to devastate a man's life as Roger has mine. Involuntarily I clutched Mrs. Everard's arm. Her face was as bloodless as mine.

"In the case of this poor thing," Bruce took up in deep tones, "if she sinned,— and, mind you, I don't say she did, but if she did,— then it's atoned for. She's dead, anyway," and he rustled a paper.

I heard Roger pacing the room. "I must have been brought up wrongly," he said; "but my mother taught me that a woman's path lay among the flowers of virtue. It's an ordinance of nature that a woman must pay the price of sin."

I have come to a dreadful decision,— if something, something as much his as mine, did not hold me to Roger just now, I should hate him.

"You're a strange sort of Christian," muttered Maxey. "I thought your religion taught forgiveness. Now, to Bruce and me, the girl in the paper here," and he tapped it with his finger, making an audible sound, "to Bruce and me," he repeated, "it's apparent that poor soul needed just this experience in the process of perfection."

"Rubbish!" ejaculated Roger. "Nonsense! With that confounded doctrine, you'd sweep away all the evidences of ancient history and the Bible. For my part, I'm satisfied with the teachings of the Church, and the decision of the commentators." Roger moved to a chair as he delivered his doctrine.

"It would be a hell of a world," said Bruce, "if we tried to follow the advice of dizzy commentators," and, lowering his voice, went on, "It seems to me, Roger, that,

with your ideas of woman and her unpardonable sin, you do away with the necessity of the Cross, which is your only stronghold. Again, what troubles me in your argument, conceding that the woman alone has to pay, is the question of the child. The little child is innocent."

Mrs. Everard drew a long breath. She leaned over eagerly to catch Roger's next words.

"Children like that must curse the day they are born!" He paused a moment, and then burst in impetuously, "I should have to see the serpent clinging to the Cross of Christ before I would admit that such a child could enter Heaven!" His voice rising high at this juncture, he continued deliberately, "The Bible says that such a child can't live among God's children."

A shudder ran through Mrs. Everard's body. Her tenseness told me that she was listening with as much avidity as I.

Bruce still maintained his ground. "I have yet to discover proof of your proverbial Heaven, with its harps and the like. If there was anything in the world that would disprove orthodoxy to me, Roger, it's an argument like yours. A child, a poor helpless little thing, with no say as to coming into the world! I believe the more it suffers at the hands of others, the greater will be its reward. At any rate, that rot you're talking was the old Mosaic law. Done away with hundreds of years ago."

Roger snapped up the last sentence of Bruce's ejaculation and replied, "If that's the old law, so is 'Thou shalt not steal!' 'Thou shalt not kill!' What was sin then is sin now. Besides, the whole civilized world agrees that the law is given us through the Bible. When the Blessed Book says that a child of illegal birth shall be kept from the congregation of the Lord, then, I say, I have authority for my beliefs."

He broke off his argument, being interrupted by an

oath from Bruce; but caught it up almost immediately and finished:

"In my mind, the woman who is mother to such a child has committed the unpardonable sin; for to condemn another to eternal loneliness is unpardonable."

Neither of the others had interrupted; but Bruce got up when Roger ceased speaking:

"Roger, you insufferable religionist!" came his deep tones. "Damn it! when a woman's hurt, body and soul, can't you forgive her; just say, 'God bless you!' and let her go?"

Roger said something I couldn't catch; but his next words were desperately uttered. "No, no! If God won't forgive her, neither will I. That kind of a sin God damns!"

Mrs. Everard got to her feet, pressing her hands over her face. I stood beside her, wild-eyed.

"You're ill," I exclaimed, and I helped her to her room. I didn't wait to speak with her. I was persuaded then that she knew!

Back into my own chamber I rushed with burning anger in my heart. In his virtuous self-importance, Roger was hateful to me. Life wasn't worth a tithe of what it had been when I had walked by the river that long-ago night, clutching the five-franc piece.

I stood at the window with clenched fists. Suddenly I felt a touch on my arm, and looking up saw Roger himself. I turned again, so he would not notice my expression.

"Confound those fellows!" he growled. "I was hoping they would go out! They're always getting me into a discussion that makes me lose my temper." Then, laughing a little ruefully, he added, "I think I'm too orthodox for them, that's all. I came because I wanted to tell you something, Phyllis."

I turned and faced him.

"Why, what's the matter, Child?" he cried, catching me in his arms. "I wanted this to be the happiest evening in our lives. You know how miserable I've been lately, Dear. I've fancied that you've been unhappy, too. I've been thinking it all over. Do you think, if you married me, it would spoil your career, Dearest?"

The room whirled. The lights flashed, and then seemed to go out. I dragged at my collar for breath. On the dressing table near the mirror lay the little vial I had intended to empty. In the street a cabby yelled at his horse, and a hawker shrieked her wares in a high, boy-like voice. The long-wished-for moment had come! I forgot his bigoted words a little time before. Roger was himself again! He was my lover-husband, my own, the better half of myself! All the anxiety that had rent my soul in the last five months melted away. Truly, as the priest had said, a man holds for a woman who has dared sin the entrance into all things good. He released me for a moment and put his hand into his pocket.

"You'll forgive me, Darling, won't you?" he demanded, leaning over me. "Look at this paper, Love. It's a special license for our marriage in London. It's sudden, I know, Sweet; but you won't refuse me! I need you! I want my wife! Why don't you answer, Phyllis? Oh, you will —"

I realized the import of the one word "marriage," and lost the rest in unconsciousness. When my senses returned, Roger was still talking with a touch of uneasiness.

"After I had decided upon our future, I couldn't wait to get your consent. But speak to me, Phyllis! Why do you look so strange?" He was pleading with the oldtime passion. "Phyllis, you'll never know how I've fought with myself over this thing. I realized what your

career meant to you, and I've had certain ambitions myself; but we can work together, can't we?"

I slipped my arms about his big waist. "What is my career or the whole world compared to you, Roger?"

He laughed happily. "Then, come along and let's tell Mother and the boys. Where is she?"

I was able only to form the next words. "You tell them, Roger; then come back to me."

He ran into Mrs. Everard's room, and I heard him say:

"Why, Mater mine, in bed? I've a piece of news for you. Tomorrow, you, Phyllis, Bruce, Max, and I are going to London, where Phyllis and I are to be married. What do you think of that? Sudden, isn't it?"

I heard Mrs. Everard murmur in choked tones, "Roger, Roger, my darling!"

Picking up the vial of poison, I flung it with a glad gesture far into the night. In another instant Roger was back at my side.

"Isn't this a happy night?" he breathed. "I shall make you glad when you have married me, Phyllis darling!"

I laughed in such glee that Roger joined in. Just then the bell rang, and I heard Donna plod along the hall to open the door.

"Postman," laughed Roger. "A bunch of home letters would top off the occasion nicely, wouldn't it?"

"Roger!" called Maxey from the next room.

"Coming in a minute, Max," replied Roger, and I hastily interposed:

"I have something to tell you tonight, dear heart."

"Roger!" Max shouted again, this time impatiently. "Come here a minute, anyhow," and with another kiss Roger left me; but halted upon the threshold to add:

"Come along with me, Phyllis!"

I paused a second to gain my composure, and then parted the curtains and followed him. A faint, sweet thrill of life, like the coming and going of an angel's breath, like a tiny flutter of a baby bird's wing in the spring, just one wild, exquisite sensation of passionate uplifting, and Roger's babe gave its first slight quiver under my heart.

"Phyllis, you're ill!" I heard Bruce say — and as I turned I came face to face with Lady Jane Grey!

CHAPTER XXVI

I HAD the dull feeling that Lady Jane Grey looked very beautiful. A long gown, fitting closely about her hips, fell to her feet. The fair face was shrouded by masses of hair, parted on one side of the low forehead. An expression I knew well imparted a sarcastic droop to the babyish mouth. From under the heavy lids the velvety eyes gazed straight into mine. I was still huddled up against the curtains, and Roger, as though stunned, made no movement toward me. Maxey still sat at the table, while Bruce stood close to Lady Jane.

An expectant hush pervaded the room. It seemed that some supernatural power kept us all from speaking. I still clung convulsively to the hangings, unable to find words. Lady Jane advanced toward me with the lithe motion of a panther, her eyes devouring me from head to foot. She halted in a direct line with Roger.

"*Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* Eet's the American cocotte!" she exclaimed in broken English.

A vertigo seized me, a haze gathered over my vision.

"American cocotte!" she repeated. "You lif here now?"

Roger was the first to assert authority and presence of mind. "Go to your room, Phyllis!" said he, and there was protection in his voice.

Sick with apprehension, I turned to go.

"Stop!" ordered Lady Jane Grey. "You not go yet!"

And, as if the master voice demanded my presence, I halted, turning my eyes on Roger in mute appeal. Maxey

whirled to leave the room; but changed his mind and remained staring fixedly at the table.

Bruce Stewart took a step nearer to me. I glanced at him — and he seemed to have grown taller and straighter. Forgetting Roger for a moment, I instinctively moved toward Bruce, feeling in my helpless terror that his strength was mine.

"Go to your room, Phyllis!" Roger ordered again.

"No, let the leetle American cocotte stay," Lady Jane said sneeringly. "Everyone knows the pretty American cocotte on Boulevard St. Michel."

She turned her vicious, sleepy eyes from Roger to me, and then back again from me to Roger. His face darkened with anger.

"Jane," he said, speaking in French, "I told you never to come to my rooms. I've done all I can for you. I can do no more. You must go now. I am going to marry Miss Fitzpatrick," he concluded, motioning toward me.

"Feetzpatrick? How many name American cocotte got? Feetzpatrick not her name on Boulevard St. Michel. You said American men took good women to be their wives — to be mothers of their children."

Again came the thrill near my heart; again a wave of physical nausea swept over me.

"That is true, I have said it," Roger answered, "and that is the reason I am going to marry Miss Fitzpatrick."

Maxey coughed nervously. Bruce drew a quick breath.

"But you choose cocotte, and not good woman," said Lady Jane with a little shrug.

"That's enough, Jane," Bruce cried hotly. "You leave this house instantly! Instantly, do you hear?"

If she would but obey Bruce's command! If I could only get Roger away before she told him any more!

Jane threw back her head with an equally angry ges-

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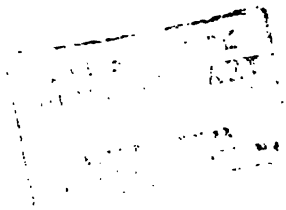
I COWERED BENEATH HIM LIKE A STRICKEN KI
WOULDN'T I



ture. "Ask Mademoiselle if she not *Donnez moi un cadeau* cocotte for many, many months."

"You're mistaken, Jane," said Roger, controlling himself with difficulty. "You must go at once!"

The sleepiness had died in her eyes, she was a blazing tigress. "Ask the white-faced pig!" she insisted. "Ask her! Ask her!"

Roger turned to me expectantly. Bruce stood rigid as a statue. His face wore a look of consternation that changed the gold in his eyes to brown. Try as I would, I could neither move nor utter a word.

"You do not speak, American cocotte! Tell them, tell them, Pig!"

She advanced toward me with a threatening gesture; but Bruce intervened with:

"You get to hell out of here damn quick!"

"Phyllis," Roger's voice had a shaken note in it, "deny it to her face! Why, it's perfectly absurd! Of course she's lying!"

Jane turned on him. "I do not lie," she snarled in smooth French. "I don't lie! When you used to come and see me, Mademoiselle lived in the rooms beside mine. She lived there for many months, and got much money just like the rest of us."

An exclamation broke from Maxey. "Heavenly Father! She *is* speaking the truth!" he burst out. "I remember now where — I — heard — your — voice! It has always puzzled me. It was you who took me to that house, where the woman who smelled of patchouli bathed my eyes." His voice broke into a sob. "You've deceived me as well as Roger!"

A storm of fury shook me from head to foot. Trembling with indignation at his ingratitude to Zadie, I flung round upon him. "Yes, it was I who saved you from the soldiers!" I loosened my grasp on the curtains and came

toward him. "And the woman — you ungrateful kid! — who smelled of patchouli is your own mother! She wears a miniature of your father that might be you, it is so like, and the other half of the jade ring that you told me was buried with — Rupert!"

A profound silence followed my words. Maxey gaped at me in bewilderment.

"You told me once about the love affair in your brother Rupert's life and of how he married a girl not his equal," I continued with deliberation. "He was your father, and not Lord Donnithorne, while the woman who bathed your eyes is your mother. Your grandmother, Lady Donnithorne, is responsible for ruining her life and Rupert's; for it was she who drove your mother into the boulevards of Paris!"

For an infinitesimal space of time the boy stood his ground bravely, fighting the proofs that crowded in upon him from the past. Then he covered his face with his hands and sank into a chair.

"God! God!" he brought out with a gulp, and, rising to his feet with a choking sound, blindly stumbled from the room.

It was thus Max received his death sentence, and I turned to receive mine.

"Roger," I appealed, "listen to me, and I'll tell you all — everything."

"You have only to say you did not live there," he answered swiftly. "No explanations are needed."

The agony in his voice spurred me to speech. "Roger —"

He sprang toward me with a wild cry. "Deny it!" he cried. "Deny it, or, by God —" His arm dropped and his voice broke in a sob as he ended, "But you can't, or you wouldn't hesitate!"

I cowered beneath him like a stricken kitten. Deny it?

How could I? I couldn't and wouldn't lie to him again. By my very inability to deny, I stood convicted before him.

"Roger," I began weakly, "Roger dear —"

"Deny it for God's sake!" he repeated more hoarsely than before.

I faced him speechless, shaking from head to foot. Contemptuously he looked me up and down, with swift, sure glances so frigid that they pierced me. Then he spoke, and at first I didn't recognize his voice:

"So, you're the woman I've loved! You're the woman I've trusted! And you're the woman I've almost married! You with your baby face, your caressing temptation! I —I'd no more marry you than I would walk straight into the jaws of hell!"

A satisfied exclamation escaped Lady Jane. It signified nothing that Bruce Stewart ordered her again to go and that at the door she paused, looked back, and laughed a low, sensuous laugh. The door closed after her, and I was left alone with Roger and Bruce.

Roger's voice was still speaking. "You lied to me like a common woman! You came into my home straight from walking the boulevards! My God! straight from a cocotte house, knowing all the time that you were like the others!"

"No, not that!" I cried in agony. "I only begged my bread like other homeless women. You've never known what it is to be hungry, Roger. You must listen to me!"

An intolerant sparkle held Roger's eyes. "I will not, Phyllis!" he exclaimed. "You've lied to me ever since you came here."

Bruce placed his hand on Roger's arm. "Give her a chance to speak, Roger. Damn it! she can explain — I know she can! Even a murderer is given a chance!"

"You don't know how I've loved her, Stewart. I've

made her my ideal, and my ideal was a woman of honor. She's torn my self-respect into shreds. Merciful Christ! I remember now!" and he brought his face close to mine fiercely. "I remember now — you did say *Donnez moi un cadeau* to me when I met you that first night —"

I well remember how I choked for breath, how the light went out as my eyes became blind. "Roger, Roger!" I moaned. "No — no more — in mercy!"

"Mercy, mercy!" he rapped out. "Mercy to a harlot, a begging hussy —"

I did not let him finish his sentence. "You're the cruelest man God ever created!" I screamed. "You must hear! You shall! You shall listen, whether you wish to or not! I was on the boulevards! I was a vagabond begging for a crust of bread! I was starving for days, and freezing, too! I did say those words to you when we met! I did live in the rooms next to Lady Jane's! And I did prowl the streets of Paris at night, asking for money! But no other man has ever kissed my lips besides you! My soul and body are sacred to you; for Boulevard St. Michel left me without a stain! In your heart you know this! You've explained to your satisfaction the unpardonable sin, and in your egotism placed your own creed in the mouth of God! But you lie when you say that Christ hasn't atoned for sins like mine! You lie! You say your ideal was an ideal of honor! Are most women tempted as I have been? Do they tramp the streets of Paris day after day looking for work? Do they need bread? If there is such a woman, may she pray God to leave her on the boulevards, rather than place her into the arms of the man she loves!" I caught my breath in a spasm of pain. "You say you will not marry me! You know that in the sight of Heaven we have been married! And — and I want to know — what you're going to say to the Christ you pretend to worship when

He asks you about your little child I shall be mother of in — five months!"

A groan fell from Bruce Stewart, and Roger dropped into a chair, and they remained silent long after the portières had closed behind me.

I went to the window in my own room and rested my head on the sill, my eyes following the dotted trail of lamps that lighted the street below. How long I sat there I shall never know; but at length I heard heavy footsteps and felt a hand upon my shoulder. Looking up, I saw Bruce standing near.

"Is it true about — the — child?" he asked huskily.

I nodded.

"I've known all the time about your connections with the boulevards. I was in the Café D'Harcourt when you took the American girl away from those scoundrels, and — and then I followed you home. After that I recognized you in the ballet at the theater; but you did not come there again, for I waited every night for a week." I felt his arm over my shoulder tighten convulsively. "I would never have dreamed that any woman could have come into my life and change it as you have. I want you to marry me, Phyllis."

Steadying myself, I looked into his face — it shone with exalted love and yearning. Under the warm, leaping glow of his eyes, I covered my own, overwhelmed by his magnificent generosity.

"Don't, Bruce!" I groaned. "For God's love, don't! You'll kill me, I'm sure!"

He gathered me up for an instant as a father would a suffering child. "I love you, poor little girl, poor, suffering baby!"

"You're offering me shelter!" I sobbed.

"Yes," he replied simply, "and the warmest and most protecting love a man can give a woman." He stroked

my hair with trembling fingers. "You know, Dear, I've wanted you to marry me for a long time. If you could only have loved me — but, of course, I didn't know about you and Roger. Phyllis, you need me more now than when I first asked you. And then — too — you must think of — the — little chap!"

I shook off his arm and stood up. "Don't talk to me any more, Bruce!" I cried. "Go away and leave me alone!"

"Phyllis," he muttered, leaning over me, "I — could have killed Roger for what he said!"

He was gone in an instant. At length I roused myself and began to empty the cupboard and chest of drawers. My one idea was to escape from the house. It didn't matter where I went. Within a few hours the whole world had changed twice,—from despair to gladness, and from gladness to—this! I recall that I was kneeling to take a bundle of papers from the drawer, when I was aroused by a slight sound behind me.

Turning, I saw Roger.

"What are you doing, Phyllis?" he asked peremptorily.

For a moment I gave him no answer, and then burst out, "I'm going back to the Boulevard St. Michel."

"You can't leave tonight!"

"You are not able to prevent me!" As I said this, I got up and faced him.

"I can, and I will! I have the authority!"

"You denied your authority!"

He winced, and an expression of agony passed over his face. I tossed handkerchiefs, laces, ribbons, and other feminine frippery in reckless confusion into my trunk.

Roger spoke again. "You were on the boulevards for months?"

"Yes."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I tried to; but I couldn't — of course I couldn't! I nearly died through it all."

"I wish you had died!" he muttered. "I wish you had! Phyllis, there can't be the slightest excuse for you. I've tried to pardon you; but I can't!"

My only answer was to fold a silk skirt and place it in my trunk.

"You might as well save yourself the trouble of packing," he said frigidly; "for you're not going tonight! You've heard what I said, Phyllis — you can't leave tonight! It's at least my duty to plan your future. When I spoke as I did just now, I didn't know of the —"

At that I wheeled on him. He didn't finish the sentence; for a very devil possessed me. I have no recollection of what I said; but it must have been something awful, for without another word he went out, drawing the curtains close after him.

CHAPTER XXVII

ZADIE has gone to bed. How little I thought, when I last left the Boulevard St. Michel, that I should ever return to beg a night's shelter from her!

As soon as I had finished my packing, I put on my outdoor things and slipped out without letting either Roger or Bruce hear me. In the hall I met Donna; and I think from her sarcastic smile that she must have heard everything, but I was past being irritated by it. She had always resented my presence in the flat.

My brain was aching with terrible confusion as I stepped out, and thought of that day when Roger and I came up together and exchanged our first kiss.

As I turned from the Place St. Michel into the boulevard, I noticed that the hands of the illuminated clock pointed to a quarter to ten. I knew that it would have been useless to look for Zadie in her rooms; but there was a chance of meeting her along her beat on the boulevard, — the same enticing, lighted boulevard crowded with pleasure-seekers and beautiful women who laugh away the night hours and sleep out their days. My feet were too weary to carry me far, and I stepped into a large café filled with students. Dropping into a seat near the window at the end of the room, I determined to keep my eyes open for my only friend; for I knew she often came into this particular café for a syrup. It was all familiar,— the clouds of tobacco smoke, and the sea of human faces, forbidding and dissipated. Silent groups here and there bent over chessboards and pushed the ivory men to and fro upon the small squares, with the inevitable "check — check."

In one corner four students sang ribald songs, shouting with laughter at their own coarseness. Life on the Boulevard St. Michel had taught me to close my ears to many things,— if one does not listen with the mind, one does not hear at all.

Just as the clock chimed ten the door swung violently open, and several people rushed in. For a moment the man ahead, on account of his height and the width of his shoulders, obscured the other members of the party, and as they neared me I recognized Anatole, followed by Babette, the cocotte who lived in the rooms near Zadie's. Her sparkling face was wreathed in smiles. They sat down, accompanied by two of their own countrymen. I caught the glance the girl threw me as she said:

"Come, join us, *ma chérie,* come!"

"*Merci, non,*" I answered. "I'm waiting for someone."

They paid no more attention to me, and I continued to keep my anxious watch over the door, hoping, every time it swung open, that the newcomer was Zadie. The old clock chimed eleven, then twelve, and still I waited, turning aside invitations to drink and be merry which were shouted across to me from time to time.

Babette's vivacity and Anatole's dark glances at the girl interested others besides myself. She sipped a tiny bit of absinthe from Anatole's cup; but wrinkled her pretty nose and ejaculated:

"I do not like it — so!"

"It wouldn't be good for your beauty to get too fond of it," put in one of her companions, with a twinge of patois in his speech.

Anatole turned frowningly upon the speaker; but Babette flashed a look of warning at her tall lover, and he dropped his eyes upon his absinthe, twirling the glass irritably.

Just then I got up and went into the ladies' waiting room. I had the powder-puff in my fingers, when I felt a touch on my shoulder.

"*C'est moi.*"

Babette was smiling into my face; but I thought there was a touch of sadness in her tones.

"You've been gone a long time," said she. "Where? In Venice?"

"No, with friends."

"Oh, I thought Captain Zadie said you'd gone from Paris to Venice."

"That was some while ago," I made haste to reply, keeping faith with the big woman who had wanted to protect me.

"Well, it's nice to see you back. Coming to our house again?"

I nodded, my throat choking with a lump.

"Anatole says Lady Jane Grey has lost her American. I asked her about him, and she called me a pig. I don't like her."

Babette was arranging the folds of her hair over the most beautiful brow I've ever seen. Her limpid, dark eyes smiled at the pretty, reflected picture. I leaned back, too sick at heart to make a reply to her statement, and she went on:

"Anatole has been away for his vacation. He's just back. He couldn't stay away from Paris and me any longer. And did you notice the monsieur beside me? He's in the school of pharmacy."

"But Anatole doesn't like him," I observed.

"No, no! Anatole hates him! I am happy when Anatole is jealous. I could die of happiness when he pinches me for flirting with other men. I love the hurt. He did this just now!"

With an impulsive movement, she slipped up her sleeve

as high as it would go, displaying a long, vivid mark, red and purple, that ran the whole length of the upper arm from the plump shoulder to the elbow.

"How terrible!" I ejaculated.

"Terrible, *ma chérie*, terrible? I wish I had them from here to here," and she made a gesture that embraced the whole of her dainty body, from the top of her head to her beaded slippers. "*Cela me fait du bien!* I know that he loves me much when he hurts me so. Men don't bother to hurt women they don't love."

My mind swept back to Roger. Babette broke in on my thoughts impetuously, an eye-pencil suspended in the air.

"Anatole goes away for good next year, and he's going to be married to his cousin. He says he may kill me before he goes. I hope he will!"

"Do you want to die?" I asked dully.

"*Oui, oui*, rather than live without Anatole! You watch tonight! I'm going to have another like this," and she pointed significantly toward the bruise on her arm. With another perk at herself in the glass, she smiled brilliantly at me and was gone.

When I was taking my seat again, I thought I saw Anatole slipping his strong fingers up and down Babette's white arm. She smiled languidly; but I knew he had hurt her, for her face whitened and she leaned more heavily upon him.

I transferred my attention to the student with the handsome face, whose eyes were filled with slumbering fires. They dwelt continually on Babette. Anatole's expression grew darker and darker, and I could see that Babette was reaping the consequences. However, a coquettish smile perpetually wreathed her lips as she pressed closer to Anatole, and threw daring glances into the other man's face.

The absinthe had gone to their heads. Anatole lifted his glass, and drained it at a draft, calling furiously for another. He was white with suppressed passion; but the repeated doses of absinthe brought the color back into the swarthy skin until it was red as an apple, and a furtive look came into his eyes. He raised one great arm and placed it across the girl, and with the other hand he sought the flesh on the slender arms, and I knew that each touch left its mark.

At length, without warning, the strange student, under the influence of drink, bent forward. Babette saw his movement; but I don't believe that she imagined what he was going to do. She raised her piquant face one moment to Anatole's, and in her expression was a heaven full of love such as any man might die to win. Then she flung her head forward, and the stranger's lips came directly down upon hers. The way in which she jerked herself back, and the look of quick disgust that sprang into her eyes, assured me that she had intended only to glance wickedly into the student's face.

I rose to my feet with a low cry, when Anatole lifted the girl completely from her chair, encircling her body with one gigantic arm. With his free hand he snatched something from his pocket. It was all over quickly, and the red stains on Anatole's hands told more than the cries that followed. The strange student slipped quietly away. After that I saw something take place between Babette and Anatole that was different from anything I had ever seen before. He had crushed her into his arms, and was searching her face with eyes that flashed burning sparks.

"Babette! Babette! *Mon Dieu! que je t'aime, que je t'aime!* I love you! I love you more than myself."

"Babette!" I cried, hastening forward. "Oh, poor little child! You have been killed!"

She turned her bloodless face to me for one instant as Anatole rose with her body strained closely against his.

"I shall not die," I heard her say. "It's a good hurt. *Mon Dieu!* I love it!"

Her arms, weak as a child's, encircled the huge neck for an instant, and Babette, unconscious, dropped her face upon the student's shoulder.

There was a confused shout that the officers were coming, and the proprietor, red and angry, placed himself directly in front of Anatole, commanding him to release the girl.

"Let me pass!" roared the student, with his white burden lifted high above the heads of the sobered revelers. "Let me pass, or by the Mother of God I'll give you a taste of the knife too!"

The proprietor jumped back, making loud protestations.

"The girl's mine! Does anyone want to interfere?" Anatole cried once more, glancing belligerently round.

No one stirred. Without further word, the student strode forward, bearing his precious burden out through the swinging doors into the white electric light of the Boulevard St. Michel.

A man beside me shrugged his shoulders and laughed, and I heard a low voice in my ear say:

"A pretty scene! Anatole's lucky, by *le bon Dieu!* The girl loves him madly. It's well to have a knife now and then to prove — love!"

I turned my head slowly, and saw the smiling, half-closed eyes of Casperone Larodi.

"The officers will be here in a moment," he said. "You don't want to be mixed up in a student row, do you? You had better come away with me."

I was too dazed to resist him, and allowed him to pilot me through the gabbling crowd to the door. He was in high good humor, and passed a franc to the waiter who

handed him his hat and stick. He took my arm in masterful fashion and directed my steps toward the Place St. Michel.

"I'm not going that way," I said, coming to a halt.

"Where are you going, then?"

"Nowhere with you. Please loosen my arm."

"No, I will not this time, my sweet! Don't make a row in the street. You know, scenes are bad for women if the police hear them —"

"Let go of my arm instantly, Count Larodi!" I repeated. "I shall throw myself on the mercy of the next officer who passes if you do not."

"Don't be foolish, Phyllis!" insisted Casperone. "Come and get something to eat. I want to talk to you."

His face was so close to mine that I felt the hot breath against my cheek, while the expression in his eyes frightened me. I felt my strength ebbing — I was so alone, and so dreadfully tired!

Just then, near the shadow of a tall monument beyond, I saw a familiar figure, and caught the flamboyant glint of red hair under the light. Zadie's fat form was coming toward me. Like a flash I left Casperone's side, and went as fast as my legs would carry me toward the only woman in Paris whom I really loved and trusted.

Zadie did not see me at first, and I almost threw myself into her arms.

"*C'est toi, Mignonne!*" she gasped. "Ees eet you?"

"*Oui, oui — c'est bien moi!*" I cried brokenly. "Zadie darling, take me home with you!"

We passed Casperone as we came back toward Café Panthéon, and, as he looked significantly from my friend to me, he smiled evilly, fingering his mustache.

. . . . . .

Zadie went after my trunk, and informed me that Donna was alone in the flat. I was glad, because, after pondering a long time, I had decided that I would not tell Zadie I had seen her son.

I went to the bank to make arrangements for my mail to be forwarded to Zadie's home. I did not want to have to be forced to send for letters to Rue de Bac. And to-night, as I sit here thinking of what this day has brought me, and of my changed condition, I marvel at the strange happenings of Fate.

The cashier of the bank asked me in polite French to step into the private office. There the president took my hand obsequiously.

"Madame has regained her money," said he.

I stared at him dumbly.

"Word came to us yesterday that your American bank has opened and is paying off the depositors dollar for dollar, with interest. Here are your papers, Madame."

I sank dizzily into a chair. My mind swept back to my friend in Boulevard St. Michel. I got up and, thanking the president, went out.

I faced Zadie tremblingly.

"*Ma fille*, you ees sick?" she gasped, leading me to a chair.

"No, no, Zadie, not sick, only happier than when I went out this morning. My money isn't lost at all. I am rich, Dear, very rich, with more money than ever before."

Zadie thrust me away, and the heavy face lost its smile. "Rich — you ees rich?" she repeated dully.

"Yes, Zadie — look! Oh, you can't read English. Sit down close to me while I — Why, Zadie, you're not crying!"

Her big round shoulders were shaking with sobs, and for a moment the stoic Frenchwoman gave way like a child.

That made me fall to crying, and for a moment we both wept stormily.

"Zadie," I gasped as soon as I could speak, "we are just a couple of babies. Oh, aren't you glad, aren't you glad?"

She wiped her face, looking at me with a touch of dull wonder. "You ees — a rich — American lady — now, and I ees only Captain Zadie!"

I caught each separate word between her sobs. "What do you mean, Dear?" I tried to raise her face to mine.

"I say," she burst out impetuously, "that now ven I ees to make somethings for you, you not need me. I vas thinking vat care I ees to take of you. And now — *Mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* I nefer see you again!"

"Zadie!" I said in a choked voice, smoothing her hair. "Zadie dear, big, stupid Zadie, listen to me! I am going to tell you a story. So please stop rubbing your eyes. I sha'n't talk until you do."

"I ees looking at you, Pheelis," she got out at last over her handkerchief.

"Then I'll begin my story. There was once upon a time a lonely little girl who lost all her money. She hadn't a single friend in all the big city she lived in —"

Zadie was leaning over me, her arm over my shoulders.

"The girl found her way to a place where another woman lived. If this woman hadn't been wise and kind to the poor, foolish girl, and if she hadn't given her heaps of advice, goodness only knows what would have happened to the silly little thing! The woman did more than that, too: she took the girl into the country to see her mother, and made the terrible days and nights as pleasant as she could — Now do you know whom I mean, Zadie?"

"*Oui, oui, oui!* But you ees poor then, and you ees rich now?" Her voice raised on the last word, making it a question.

I felt a new happiness in my money. "Yes; but I was telling you about the girl, Zadie. Are you going to let me go on?"

"*Oui!*"

"Then she loved someone —" I stopped, and my sorrow rushed over me with such force that I could not finish the parable. "Oh, don't you see that money makes it easier for you to take care of me, Dear?" I cried desperately. "Zadie, Zadie, I'm so miserable that if you left me I should die! I never want to be separated from you again."

"*Pauvre mignonne*, poor *fille!*" There was a world of sympathy in her ejaculation.

After thinking a moment, I said, "I want to go to the forest of Fontainebleau, and you must go with me right away!"

"Fontainebleau!" She lifted her hands in shocked surprise. "But eet ees *triste* there, *ma chérie*, so lonely, so *triste!*"

"Nevertheless, I've a fancy to go, Zadie. It's very solemn, quiet, and restful. I was there once. Bruce Stewart told me that he stayed there one summer in a monastery that had been turned into a resting place for tourists. There's where I want to go!"

Zadie looked frightened. "*Mais non!* A monastery!" she cried. "These places ees haunted."

"Haunted? Nonsense!"

"*Oui, oui, oui*, with the dead monks, *ma petite!*"

"Zadie dear, how foolish! Dead people can't come back!"

"Monks can get out of their graves," she insisted stubbornly, "and then eet ees cold and dull for my girl."

"Not if you will go with me, Zadie," I replied wearily, "I want to lose the world and rest!"

"I come weez you, *Mignonne*," was what she said ap-

prehensively, and the mother-look I knew so well illuminated her face as she kissed me.

. . . . . .

Before Zadie and I left Boulevard St. Michel I went in to see Babette, with Violetta in my arms. Anatole had gone out to smoke, and the little cocotte was alone, her hair brushed back and plaited in two long braids that fell over the pillow. She smiled as I bent over her and pressed her hand.

"Is Babette better?" I asked, as if she were a child.

She nodded, and I saw an expression leap into her eyes that puzzled me. "You are getting well now, Babette," I insisted.

"*Oui, oui;* but not quickly, and I'm so unhappy!"

"Why?" I queried. "Why, Childy, Anatole loves you more than the whole world."

"*Oui, oui,* I know that; but — but —" Two scalding tears rolled down her cheeks. Her lips quivered pitifully.

"Babette!" I whispered, leaning over her. "Poor little Babette, you must trust him! He loves you devotedly."

"But — but I can't — I can't get money while I am ill, and we must have money, Anatole and I!"

Just at that instant the door opened, and Anatole came in with the subdued awkwardness of a man in a sickroom. He took off his hat and smiled bravely at the girl on the bed.

"My little one is better?"

"*Oui,* Anatole."

"And the baby-love doesn't cry any more?"

For answer two more tears welled up and stole slowly down to the pillow. Anatole stooped over her, and wiped them away.

"Anatole will punish his baby if she weeps." Then he looked at me in apology. "She wants to work; but I

know that in some way we shall manage to get along. You see, Mademoiselle, I've promised Babette that when I go away next year she shall go with me. I'm going to marry her."

The flash that lit up the white face lasted but a moment; but the shadow settled over it again.

"But I can get no money for you, Anatole. If anyone else works for you, I shall die!" Her voice was fierce in spite of her weakness.

"Hush, Babette!" cried Anatole with eagerness. "I can work, can't I? It doesn't matter if I lose a year, after all. I can earn enough money to take the lectures next spring. We will struggle through somehow." He turned to me. "I can work!" he repeated.

A thought came to my mind straight from Heaven. How happy it made me! I pushed Anatole aside and bent over Babette.

"Babette *chérie*, would you like to give Anatole some money?"

"He must have money!" she wailed. "It has made me so happy to work for him, my Anatole! Oh, I shall soon be able to go out again! Anatole, *mon amour*, wait, wait, only wait a few days!"

"Babette," I insisted again, "listen! I am going to give you money for Anatole!"

Her whole expression changed in a twinkling. Unbelief struggled with hope; hope was quenched by weariness.

"You're poor, too, Mademoiselle. You couldn't give Anatole and me money." The flower-like face drooped painfully.

Anatole kissed her slim fingers. A glance, intense and longing, shot from his eyes. Babette looked at me wistfully, with a kind of dumb faith that I would give her the solution to the problem that confronted her.

"Babette, wouldn't it make you happy if I — if I gave you enough money to carry you and Anatole over this next year? Then you need not go on the boulevards!"

In my eagerness to make the girl happy, I had forgotten Anatole; but his exclamation brought his presence back to me, and I glanced at him.

"It has been like death to have her on the boulevards!" he groaned. "Yet, what could we do? I couldn't leave her — I can't now, can I?"

The sharp French voice asked the question with an intonation implying that no answer was expected. Neither the girl nor the man took in the import of my offer. How was it possible for them, when they didn't know of my change of circumstances? They were searching each other's soul through glances that were tinged with fire.

"Anatole, are you going to marry Babette right away?" I asked.

"*Oui*, Mademoiselle! Life is too short to live without her. My cousin is rich; but I'd sooner kill myself than marry her now. I shall never love anyone but —" he glanced toward the bed, tears springing into his eyes.

"And you want to marry Anatole, Babette?"

"But naturally." Her tone was almost petulant.

"Then, Dear," I took her eager face between my palms, "I am going to let you have enough money to keep you and Anatole until he begins practising for himself and can earn money for you both. My money has been restored to me!"

They were silent with amazement. I stretched out my hand, and Anatole with a sob impulsively took it in his.

"Can't you understand?" I said, with swimming eyes. "I am so miserable myself that it will help me if I can do something to make you two happy."

As I ran tearfully out of the room, Violetta lifted her cold, pink nose and gave me a long, sympathetic lick.

CHAPTER XXVIII

WE have been here at Fontainebleau one day. The journey in the closed carriage up the long, winding road that runs through the forest toward the white gorges, rising high in the vapory mist, brought back that day when Bruce had asked me to be his wife. Again and again I asked Zadie if we were nearly there.

"When we turn the corner by the big tree weez the broad arms we see the building. Tired, *ma petite?*"

"*Oui, oui,* so very tired! Zadie, you said there was a boy — is he very young?"

"Eight or nine," she answered. "I like a child about the place. Eet ees more cheerful. I'm glad I bring Violetta!"

Zadie put her eye to the opening in the curtain and nodded idly as she counted with halting precision the long shadows of the trees. Presently she pulled the curtain aside, and pointed to an edifice of dark stone reared in the mist-covered sunshine.

"There ees eet!" she cried.

Out of the roof of the monastery came a faint trail of smoke, and beyond I could see a giant boulder rise in its grayness, the top lost in the cloud vapor.

"How desolate it all is!" I exclaimed with a shudder.

Zadie involuntarily put out her hand. "I told you —" she began.

"I know you did, and I'm not sorry I came. I could not have come alone, Zadie. So that is the monastery?"

"*Oui* — and there ees the little François, Mère Durand's

son, wafing to the *cocher*. He ees a pert leetle wretch."

The carriage came to an abrupt standstill, and before the *cocher* could descend or Zadie could move the peasant boy thrust a sunburned face, wrinkled with curiosity, into the cab. As far as I could see, he was the only youthful thing within view. His strong, young body seemed an emblem of spring in this gray, hoary place.

Directly at his back, his mother, a hard-featured peasant woman, who seemed to have gathered grayness from the mist, peered in upon us. She did not speak until we were out and Zadie had given the francs to the *cocher*.

"*Bon jour*, Mère Durand," said Zadie.

"*Bon jour*," she replied somewhat sullenly.

I noted her inquisitive womanish scrutiny; but the forlornness of my position made me indifferent to her unfriendly eyes. She accused me by her rasping tone, though her words were natural enough.

"Does Madame's husband come, too?"

Zadie opened her lips to speak, then closed them again.

"No," I replied in pain, "he won't be here at all."

She turned abruptly and led us through the stone door. In another minute we stood under the roof of the low room in which I am now writing. From the window I can see the huge piles of rocks, grotesque and vast, as though a giant at play had tumbled them down in pure mischief.

The forest is stretched over miles of towering mountains, meeting the night at the distant horizon. The bird and insect life of the gorges is now silent in the twilight, and I see the stars come out one by one. The grinning old moon makes fantastic, playing figures with the tree shadows. And so I face my first night in the forest of Fontainebleau.

* * * * * * * * *

Zadie and I got up at the dawn of our first day here, and with the consent of the peasant woman ransacked every inch of the monastery.

This room is oblong in shape, and stands by itself, having at one time been the cell where the monks did penance. It was here that they used to flagellate themselves. In one corner lies a round, dark stone, in another a cot covered with a white bedspread, and a bench runs the length of the wall opposite close to the stone.

I have been roused from lethargy by the sight of a huge cross that rises to the ceiling with the body of the crucified Savior carved rudely from stone upon it. It seems that the symbol of divine suffering has an almost sinister significance for me. Was this Roger's Christ, or the smiling Savior of the Louvre? The carved body gives me no solution; and there is but an expression of pain on the face.

The child is at his play, and I can see him digging with a rusty knife on the white path that leads to the well, while voices talking in patois come from the inner monastery.

"Ask her for a hundred francs more," said a man's voice gruffly.

"Hush!" replied the woman. "She'll hear —"

My eyes sought Zadie's; but the rest of the sentence was whispered. A moment afterward, the peasant woman came shuffling back.

"As — Madame is likely to be ill," she hesitated, taking me in with significant eyes, "I must charge a hundred franc more the month."

"I bargained with you for two of us," Zadie broke in angrily in French. "How dare you ask Madame for more?"

"You didn't tell me all," the woman answered stub-

bornly. "There is danger, and doctors are far away. I must ask for payment in advance."

"Give her the money, Dear," I interposed, and at my insistence Zadie ungraciously counted out the notes from my purse.

I turned to the Frenchwoman, whose manner had softened at sight of the money. "May your little boy go with me sometimes into the gorges beyond?"

"Whenever Madame likes," she answered with some surprise. "The little François is all I have — he's a good child."

She looked out on the boy, still scraping up the dirt with energy and purposeless effort. Suddenly he raised his eyes. The peasant's homely face brightened, and the child threw down the knife and ran into the room. She stood stolidly, running her fingers through the straight, black hair, as François stared impudently at me. There was something in her pride of motherhood that touched me. I was obliged to turn to the window to hide my agitation.

As far as sight could reach, great boulders rise gray in the misty air,— north, south, east, and west tell the eternal tale of some glacial age that had left this desolation in its track.

The woman spoke again. "There!" she said, pointing to the dark stone. "There's where the monks did penance — when they sinned." She wrapped her hands in her coarse apron, and inclined her head cornerwise. "Those dark spots are blood," she went on; and then, changing the conversation, asked, "Will Madame have her food in here?"

"Yes," I replied; "at least for the present."

The peasant noted my eyes linger on the Cross, and she changed the subject again. "It's been there ever since the monks went away. Madame doesn't object?"

"I love it!" I broke in eagerly. "If the monks found peace with it —"

"Madame will find it also, *n'est ce pas?* If Madame asks for peace, the good God will surely send it to her." She crossed herself devoutly.

Zadie gave a grunt, and turned upon my interrogator. "Do not worry Madame, Mère Durand. She must rest now."

Taking the child by the hand, the peasant went out, and I saw her walking awkwardly to the wash-house near the well.

Zadie closed the door in answer to a look that I gave her. "You ees tired, *ma mignonne,*" she said, patting my shoulder with her big hand.

"It seems to me," I said presently, "that in the quietness of this place I shall grow to understand things a little better. Roger said I had committed the unpardonable sin; but now, somehow, I feel that his God is not my God any longer. If He were as merciless as that, Zadie, I know I should hate Him!"

"The man ees an ass," Zadie observed decidedly. "Think your head no more about him, *ma petite.*"

"I will not allow myself to think that what I have done has placed — *us* beyond redemption," I went on, speaking rather to myself than to her, and I searched the mute stone face of the Christ for an answer.

Zadie, uncomprehending, grunted again. The only fact she understood was that I was suffering, and she repeated, "The man ees an ass."

"Hush, Zadie!"

"I vish to *le bon Dieu* you not come here!" she broke in. "You haf your money. You haf eferyt'ing in the vorld to mek you happy. You not want to marry the man, do you?"

"I can't tell what I want, Dear."

And Zadie cried, "Dear, dear! the girl ees a fool. Vhat good ees a man weezout sense?"

This was Zadie's measure of Roger, and, as it was I who had given it, I did not attempt his defense. Her next words opened up a train of thought and gave me new interest.

"Eef you not find somet'ing about your God puzzeel here," said she, "there ees no place vhere you can."

Suddenly the mist lifted and the sun shone out in splendor. The dark gorges were alight, and slowly from the crevices that separated the great stones snakes stole out, some large and some small. They rose to the tops of the boulders, and stretched themselves out, their long, curved bodies forming half-circles of black on the whiteness of the rocks.

Roger's words dinned into my brain with maddening persistence: "I should have to see a serpent clinging to the cross of Jesus Christ before I would admit that such a child could enter Heaven!"

Could I discover from one of these outlawed creatures if there ever had been, or were now, an enmity still existing between the serpent and the woman? My eyes fell on the cross, which was gilded by a level beam of sunlight.

The Serpent and the Cross! Both were within my reach!

Was my mind in a state of morbidity as Zadie had intimated? It seems to me that I am on the verge of solving a mystery, on the brink of a new comprehension.

. . . . . .

Zadie had arranged our baggage, and was standing by the window. "Ah, me! the meest falling again," she said, "and daylight ees going! I not like these autumn efenings."

"Does Paris call you, Zadie?" I asked, going over and slipping my hand into hers.

She did not speak; but thrust her face into the stone aperture.

"Zadie," I cried, "you can't be lonely for Boulevard St. Michel?"

"God forbid!" she answered plainly, in a low tone. "I ees t'inking thet eef I ees there, mebbe I meet my Engleesh boy again, my Engleesh baby; but — but he hate me and despise me!" She broke off abruptly; then added, "Oh, la la! I haf fetch your suppaire, *Chérie*," and moved off in the direction of the *cuisine*.

"I not know vhy eet ees, Pheelis," Zadie remarked to me at supper, resting her bare elbows on the table, "since I haf not worked, I haf thought more about thet boy than I efer before make. Perhaps eet ees because I ees with him that once."

She ended with a sigh, and for a long time we were silent. Even then I was not tempted to tell her of my new knowledge of Maxey. The moon was up, and as I looked out once more into the overhanging mist I saw that the gorges were white, glistening with the steady drip of the vapor, and that the snakes had gone back into their hiding places.

. . . . . .

Zadie came home from Paris the other day, and for some minutes she fidgeted nervously about without taking off her hat. Her face was very pale; and, because I can't get up my courage to meet trouble now, I didn't ask her what worried her. Suddenly she cried out.

"I brought 'em both back weez me!"

"Who?" I exclaimed in terror.

"Carlotta and Rosalie."

I went up to her eagerly. "Then where are they? Why didn't you bring them here to me? Are they in the village?"

Zadie laughed. "You ees in terrible hurry, Pheelis.

They're waiting down by the spring. Oh, *ma bébé*, they suffer so weez that man, and I sneaked 'em here! You say, sneak in America, *n'est ce pas?*"

I didn't heed her forced joke about American slang, but cried, "Oh, run and get them, Zadie! Bring both of them quick! Go now! Don't wait!"

Walking excitedly to the door, I watched her disappear round the bend in the path. Then, as she came to view again, I saw first Rosalie, with her youthful, beautiful face, and following after her Carlotta, weak and wretched.

Zadie was speaking to them rapidly; and, although I couldn't catch what she said, I knew it was about me, for she looked up and smiled. When Rosalie saw me, she ran forward; and, cupping her face with my palms, I kissed it. Carlotta, her great eyes searching my soul miserably, sidled from Zadie to me; and, because I realized the agony of the hour through which she was passing, I kissed her also, and drew her into the room. There we four waited as the mother wept during our silence. Rosalie stood with filling eyes, and Zadie grunted hoarsely as she set out some chairs.

When Carlotta was quieter I hastened them to their story. Rosalie had been taken to her father's home where another woman, now his wife, had not only abused her, but day after day her mother's dishonor had been flaunted at her. Rosalie's voice lowered as she rehearsed the scene between her father and herself.

"He told me horrible things about my mother, Madame — untruthful things that made me hate him. My mother told me they were lies."

"So they were, Rosalie *mignonne*," I insisted stoutly. "Your mother, your poor little sick mother, must have a chance to get well!"

Rosalie bounded toward me, and spoke in English, "Madame, will you give her that one chance? I'll work

for you and her always —" She began to sob violently. "She'll die if she has to sew and work now, when she's ill. I can work, though."

Later, when Zadie had soothed her, she went on rapidly with the history of her escape, of her return to Boulevard St. Michel. Still speaking, she went forward and slipped an arm round the stooped shoulders of Carlotta. The woman passionately kissed the girl's slender fingers.

"I've decided," went on Rosalie, "to stay with my mother, and, Madame, Captain Zadie said you were good and would tell me what to do."

Like a flash of lightning came the thought of Roger's threat. He had said that I was unfit to be a mother. Carlotta's mother-life was much the same as mine. Impulsively I drew Rosalie to me.

"I'll not only tell you what to do," said I, "but help you do it. Zadie, take Rosalie down by the spring."

When we were alone, Carlotta rose and stood looking down at me, her features convulsed into woeful contortions under suppressed emotion. Fearing she would break into wild weeping again, I said:

"You want to leave Paris, don't you, Carlotta?"

"*Oui, oui*, with my baby! But how? But how?"

"If you had the money, you could go away, couldn't you?"

She nodded, dropping her face into her hands. "But I haven't any! If Zadie hadn't brought us here today, he would have come and taken Rosalie away. She could never escape from him again!"

"It was right, quite right, of Zadie to bring you to me," I soothed. "I'm sorry I haven't done something before, Carlotta; but there is still time. Have you ever thought of going to America?"

"America — America!" repeated Carlotta. "The land where people are free and women are good?"

Remembering the peace of my home, I nodded.

"How could we get there?" demanded Carlotta, hope springing into her eyes.

"I'll help you for your sake and Rosalie's. Besides, it will make me happy. I have more money than I need. You must not return to Boulevard St. Michel, because it would be dangerous for Rosalie. Zadie will attend to every detail for you. Will you stay here with me until you go away?"

At first she didn't fully understand my broken French; but I took pains to repeat it all over, and added:

"You must never break your girl's faith in you by telling her anything about your Paris life. In America, among the mountains, you will forget it all and be well and good again. Go now and bring back Rosalie."

The few moments I was alone I grew so nervous that when Zadie came in she exclaimed:

"You have a fever, *ma petite!* Lie down and let Zadie bathe your face!"

From my position on the cot I told Rosalie our plans, and she skipped about in delight, clapping her palms together, the traces of tears entirely gone.

"You're wonderful, Pheelis!" exclaimed Zadie when I had finished.

"And America — wonderful America!" burst out Rosalie in girlish glee. "We're going there, *ma mère*, my sweet mother, my good mother! And your baby will take such good care of you that when Madame Fitzpatrick come to that country one day she'll see you fat like this!"

Rosalie pouched out her cheeks, and, snatching a kiss from Carlotta's radiant face, danced out into the sunlight.

"I couldn't have done it, if it hadn't been for Aunty's money," I said presently, "and, Zadie, you're to go to Paris tomorrow and buy them what clothes they need, and make all the arrangements for their trip. They

mustn't go to Boulevard St. Michel any more! Oh, dear! how happy I am!"

. . . . . .

I suppose it's living over again the days before Carlotta and Rosalie went away that makes me so tired. I've had a boat postal from them. Very soon they will arrive in New York.

What a lot of pleasure and hope a little money can give! I take a long breath of satisfaction when I think that I have had it to give, and I haven't that feeling of rebellion that I had when I paid little Nan's fare back to America. I wonder how the wee girl is? What a glorious thing money is, after all!

No, I mean that it is delightful to have it to exchange for happiness, and I do love poor Carlotta and pretty Rosalie!

Lately I've been wishing to see Bruce Stewart.

CHAPTER XXIX

EVER since coming to this monastery I have been weighed down with the sense of my sin, burdened with the responsibility of a life other than my own. Last night, as I tossed about, the realization came to me that all my faith in God, all my looking up toward better things, had been inspired by love for one man. In worshiping Roger, I had deluded myself into belief that I was worshiping the Christ.

This morning I got up at daylight and went into the gorges just as the sun, like a solid orange ball, rose in the vapor that curled upward, blue, thick, and opaque. It gained color as the sun gained strength, until it became shot with rose like an opal. The fog formed itself into wraiths, a veritable procession of ghosts, passing over the forest, and as I breathed it the heavy dampness compressed my lungs like a weight. The shrill, clear twittering of the early birds rose from the distant gorges, and high up, along the horizon, the trees lifted themselves into ranks against the sky, their lower branches still submerged in the mist. A menacing loneliness seized me, the loneliness of a soul without a god. Roger's Christ had gone with him!

Something stirred a few paces from me, and I saw the stealthy body of a snake, gray as the morning itself, glide swiftly over the stony path. Fascinated, I came to an abrupt halt and watched the reptile's undulating body disappear. The gray snake and I were at enmity with God, were both outcast creatures in a world filled with shadows.

Roger's words, about the serpent clinging to the Cross of Christ, recurred to me. Was my child to share in the curse of the serpent? Must I pay the full penalty of the unpardonable sin? Or was Roger's God a false god, a cruel myth built out of a narrow creed? With a multitude of conflicting thoughts tormenting my mind, I hurried back to the monastery.

. . . . . .

As day after day has passed and I near the week of my dissolution, I have tried to form a religion for myself. The Savior has risen for me: Roger cannot keep me from the redemption that was meant for the whole world.

The other day I asked François to catch a snake for me. I had a fancy to bring it into this room in which the atmosphere still seems permeated with prayers like a fragrance. But he has not brought one yet, and I'm not sorry; for what should I do with it?

Roger said that he would expect to see the serpent cling to the Cross sooner than a child —

Dear God! how could he say that? How dare he? My precious little love — Baby! Even now, before your birth, I adore you!

. . . . . .

This afternoon I sat working on a small garment for future use. I delighted in looking it over. I am happy when I think of some things, even without Roger, and the sight of the box of tiny clothes in the corner makes my heart beat wildly.

François came to the door, stopped immediately before me, and surveyed me with grave eyes.

"What have you there, Dear?" I asked, looking at a tiny tin box he had in his hand.

"Spider," he ejaculated.

"You're not going to kill it, François?" I implored.

"I'm going to pull his legs off and see him hop without

them. He can jump without any legs at all — as far as that!"

His small, sunburnt face broke into a smile as he measured off a distance with his bare toe. "François," I coaxed, "if you'll give the spider to me, I'll give you a franc. But, besides that, you must promise me not to catch any more spiders and hurt them. Will you?"

He stretched out the box, and I took it in my hand.

"You see, Dear, this poor spider might have a lot of little spiders somewhere. There's your franc: run away and show it to mother."

After he had gone, I opened the tin box, and the spider took himself away under a rock nearby. How I loved that little spider, his spraddling legs, his poppy eyes! I love all of him — because I am persuaded that God's spirit is in him, too. And I fell to thinking of the life mystery of the gorges — of the tiny, round-eyed, harmless insects that scamper out of the shadows and away again before one can tell where they have gone. And men say that Christ did not reconcile that part of his creation! I don't believe it!

. . . . . .

Today has brought me a true revelation.

This afternoon when François was playing by the spring, from which his mother was bringing water to wash her linen, I sat stitching and waiting in the sunshine, stitching and thinking, until the tears fell upon the tiny, rounded sleeves of my baby's robe. François shouted in glee, his youthful voice ringing through the gorges as he ran and played. It was one of those days when the sun shines hot upon the earth as if in passionate farewell to the dead summer.

In the corner of my room the cold block stands, fashioned into the Cross, with the Savior upon it. On the boulders, stretching themselves in the sun, lay the serpents

whose prototype made the Cross a necessity. From one to the other my eyes rolled with infinite longing. Above the tops of the trees was the blue of the sky; beyond that was the solved mystery of the woman and her sin.

I was brought out of my dreaming by a laugh coming from the trees below, and a voice said in English:

"Isn't that extravagantly funny?"

Extravagantly funny! Where in this white-bouldered, spirit-haunted forest of Fontainebleau could anything extravagantly funny be found?

Again the laugh pealed out, and an instant later I saw a troop of tourists clamor into a vehicle and drive slowly down the hill, the brake grating as they went.

François stood watching the party with open mouth, and then followed his mother into the wash-house.

Under my fingers a tiny, embroidered edge, encircling the neck of a snow-white robe, grew inch by inch,— soft ruching folding tenderly to shield a baby skin,—and the tears of a sinful mother must do something to smooth the way of the little child who, in spite of the law, in spite of conventionalities, will live and demand its being.

Perhaps an hour later, perhaps less,— I have no means of knowing,— my eyes became riveted upon a black line moving slowly up the white track that led from the spring to the monastery. I stood up, and the dress fell to the floor. I stepped over it into the sunlight. A snake was dragging itself painfully along the path, its head poised high in the air, a hissing sound issuing from its throat.

"Extravagantly funny!"

The meaning of the words was plain. Someone had wounded the ponderous back so that the trailing tail beyond the hurt was a useless thing. The glorious life of the creature lay in the head and in the rounded, curved throat with its magnificent coloring. The wounded part was inert, and quivered in the very agony of its dying.

I moved a step nearer, and the creature, frightened, reared its head upward as if to strike me; but the effort made it drop panting to the earth. Without a reasoning thought, I stooped downward and grasped it by the neck. The forked tongue fluttered searchingly in and out. Close to the gaping throat little muscular waves ran quivering over the bleeding back as I pulled the body into the room.

Breathlessly shutting the door, I was alone with the stone Cross and the bleeding Serpent. Through the small window slanted a lonely ray of sun, falling first upon the quivering reptile, then upon the Cross, and lastly upon me,— a golden beam, dancing with motes.

I sat down on the couch, and for several seconds watched the writhings of the forest monster. Presently I rose, walked wide of it, and, pouring some milk into a small pannikin, heated it over the candle. When it was warm, I placed it before the creature, and, after the first moment of doubt, it ran its tongue in and out of the milk. Then I straightened out the injured body until the silvered tail rested upon the pedestal of the Cross, and suddenly I noticed that I had dropped the body of the snake upon my baby's dress. It did not strike me as incongruous that I should wrap it in it until this moment — it was imperative just then to cover its bleeding wound.

. . . . . .

I've named my invalid Napoleon; for he is much like that old warrior. I can imagine the fight he had for his life. As I think back, I can remember how the beady eyes seemed to take in the whole room, and how, with a swift, furtive motion, the serpent made its way toward my cot, dragging the blood-stained dress along in its undulating retreat. I have filled a wooden box with straw and stones for him. I can hear now the rustling of his body.

What a bewildering, mysterious plan Creation is! There was a time when I thought that Roger's ideas must

be true because they were his; but I have disproved one already. Roger had said that the Heavens would fall if the Serpent and the Cross came into contact,— my serpent had trailed his nerveless tail over the foot of the Cross of Christ, and the heavens are as silently majestic and unfalling as ever.

CHAPTER XXX

YESTERDAY, as usual, I started out to walk, and had just turned the bend in the hill when a distance up I saw a man outlined against the sky. He was dressed in gray, a slouch hat was drawn well over his eyes, and from beneath it he was peering at the hills beyond. I paused, not wishing to attract his attention, hoping that he would depart by the tourist's road on which he stood. As he faced me, I discovered Bruce Stewart.

"Oh, Bruce!" I exclaimed, hurrying forward and holding out my hands.

"I couldn't stay from you any longer, Phyllis," he said softly. "I've been frightened since receiving your letter telling me where you were. Poor child, how pale you are! One would think I was a deadly enemy!"

I piloted him down the path leading from the spring to the monastery. The tears were dropping from my eyes, and Bruce, noting them, remained quiet. I ushered him through the little stone portal of my home.

"You can't stay here, Phyllis, you simply can't!" he said with misery in his voice. "Tell me why in Heaven's name you chose this dismal hole!"

"I don't know why I came here, Bruce," I replied, "unless it was to get away from Paris and everyone there. I heard you speak first of this place when we were here in the forest that day. Do you remember?"

He nodded. "But I didn't live here, Phyllis. It's too confoundedly lonely. Now, a bit to the south there's quite a settlement in summer. It's impossible for you to stay here!"

"I can and I must, Bruce," I cried; "for it seems to me that since coming here I'm beginning to work out my own salvation, to destroy old beliefs, and to dig out new ones for myself." Half laughing through my tears, I pointed flippantly to the stone in the corner, and continued, "That's where the monks used to bang their heads when doing penance; so, if I can raise a greater consciousness of my sin, it's ready for me!"

"Phyllis, for God's love!" Bruce cried out sharply. He caught me by the shoulders, twisted me round, and looked into my face.

"I'm not mad, Bruce," I said soberly. "I'm sorry I said that. It was stupid. Forgive me! I seem sometimes scarcely fit for human society."

"Poor little broken child, poor girl!" he murmured softly.

I went to the door and looked out in silence for some time, during which Bruce did not move.

"If it's true," I said presently, without turning my head, "that there was a Christ crucified, I am growing into the conviction that He is mine; no matter what I've done, the child's yonder, and his dog, and those silent serpents sunning themselves out there on the white boulders are also a part of him."

After a brief pause, Bruce came to my side and scanned the gorges. "Phyllis," he said, in deep inflection, "without doubt the Master lived, a good man! He had no thought of anything but universal love and eternal kindness. As you say, He loved the dog, the serpent, and even the ugliest little worm and insect that crawls on the ground."

"Oh, Bruce dear, it's a beautiful thought, a wonderful belief," I replied with a fresh rush of tears, "and I want to believe that way, too! But tell me all that happened after I left that night."

"Roger and I are no longer living together. We didn't agree about you." He supplemented this after a moment's reflection with, "And Max has gone to England."

"Does Roger know where I am?"

"I did not give him your address, as you requested me not to. Still, he knows where you are."

My face must have betrayed much anxiety, and Bruce looked at me and sighed.

"I want to know all that happened," I insisted, "all that he said. Bruce, won't you tell me?"

"Roger told me how he came to love you — and everything else."

"Yes?" I interrogated, waiting for him to continue.

"He said that the night he asked you to be his wife you did not tell him of the —"

"No, I didn't!" My face paled under his gaze. I knew there was something he wanted to tell me.

"God knows, it was an awful shock to him! Of course, I had known all along about the boulevards, and have cursed myself a thousand times for not speaking to you about it. Roger told me that until you yourself admitted it he would have staked his soul upon your innocence. Phyllis dear, I want to tell you something. I would stake my soul now, this minute, upon your goodness and truth!"

I turned to him suddenly; but he motioned me to silence.

"Your life at the flat, your face, your voice, everything, told me that."

He was speaking too well of me. "I loved him, Bruce dear, I loved him so!" I sobbed in excuse.

"And that great love condones any sin there might have been," he put in swiftly. "For such love much may be pardoned."

He went white as he spoke the last sentence, and I made

an effort to touch him; but he shook off my hand nervously and hurried on:

"Phyllis, I don't want to offend you with what I'm going to say; but things will not go well with you and Roger." He hesitated. "You've got to have the protection of someone who loves you."

I endeavored to say something; but the expression in his eyes silenced me.

"I must speak!" he said, almost harshly. "I came purposely for that. I must protect you from Roger!"

I rose unsteadily to my feet. "Protect me from Roger?" I repeated. "He couldn't, he wouldn't, harm me!"

Bruce gave no attention to my interruption. "And then there's another to be thought of — the little fellow!" His voice was twisted with pain. "It's for the good of both of you that I have come," he murmured.

"Tell me of Roger!" I insisted faintly.

I remember now how tenderly Bruce bent over me and touched my face with his large, white hands. "I will tell you everything, if first you will answer a question of mine."

I gave a hasty, affirmative nod.

"Phyllis, do you — do you love your little child?"

I drew back and stood up, and before I could reply Bruce had taken up again hurriedly:

"I couldn't realize just how you felt about it. You see, I didn't know, and I must know!"

"Why?"

"On Roger's account."

He rose also and looked down at me, pale to the line of his hair. He waited for me to answer. I put back my hand and braced myself against the wall.

"Why on Roger's account?" I got out at last.

"I had to come and warn you," he said. "I could not

let it go. Roger says that he will take your child away from you as soon as it is born. I have come to ask you to marry me, Phyllis, that I may be able to protect you even against him."

He made no move to come forward; but kept his eyes steadily upon me. Every drop of blood in my body froze under his words, and sight left my eyes. Suddenly the horror of what he had said swept over me, and all the love I had for my unborn baby surged within me like a raging sea. I remember that when my sight came back I saw Bruce's eyes filled with tears, and he quickly turned to the door; but on the threshold he paused and looked back. I sprang forward and caught at his arm dizzily.

"Don't go!" I said. "Please don't leave me!"

"I don't intend to. I have come to ask you to marry me. It is the only way to save you and be happy myself."

My thoughts flew back to Roger, and I said faintly, "He couldn't do that! He simply couldn't be so wicked! Did he tell you so?"

Bruce nodded.

My spirit took fire. "He shall never have my baby so long as I live!" I cried. "Never — never! Why, he couldn't, Bruce, he couldn't!"

Then I think I fainted, and when I came to myself Zadie was sitting beside the cot rubbing my hands — and Bruce was gone.

. . . . . .

I was sick for three weeks, not having strength to raise my head or to think out a plan whereby I might keep what God has given me.

One afternoon I said to Zadie, "Darling, could — could Mr. Everard take my baby away from me?"

Zadie turned from the dress she was mending. "*Nom de Dieu!* He won't vant eet!"

"Yes, he does," I said wearily. "He thinks I am not good enough to have it."

"Vat?" Zadie shrieked out the word, throwing her sewing from her.

"He has said so. I want to find out if he can take it by law."

"The law ees alvays for the man," remarked Zadie darkly.

I told her slowly and with many tears the story Bruce had told me, and she punctuated my broken sentences with grunts.

"You not luf the pig now?" she demanded.

"No, no!" I cried. "He's too wicked! Oh, if I had only realized how petty and little-souled he was!"

Zadie eyed me thoughtfully.

"What are you thinking of?" I asked. "Tell me, Zadie, can't you help me?"

"You luf thees Mr. Bruce?"

I shook my head. "But I have a great respect and affection for him."

Although my words were scarcely audible, Zadie caught them. "Marry heem, then, and he steeks by you weez the other devil. He told me vhen you sick he wanted to marry you. He comes back soon."

"I couldn't do that, Zadie. I couldn't! He is too good. It would be the greatest crime I could commit. I am not good enough for him."

"You too good for any man," she said with finality.

. . . . . .

Babette sent me a letter. She and Anatole are married and are keeping house in a little flat near the Sorbonne University. When I am better, I shall accept her invitation to their home.

CHAPTER XXXI

YESTERDAY I went to Paris to see Father Beulais. He is the one man to whom I can unburden myself. I realized that, if I'm going to rise out of my present state to better conditions, I must gather together all my forces. If ever woman wanted to learn to use the wings of her soul, it is I.

At the priest's house the *concierge* met me with the information that Father Beulais was out.

"He was confessing someone," said he; "but I fear that he has gone to keep an appointment. I heard his door close five minutes ago."

"Will he be gone long?" I asked.

"I think not. Will Madame wait?"

I assented briefly, and he ushered me into the small drawing-room. The place was filled with memories; for it was here, some weeks before, that I had decided to end my life in order to save another from the priest's superstition. I have traveled a long distance in spirit since then and decided a lot of things for myself.

A slight noise broke in upon my thoughts. Somewhere a door banged, and I heard the sound of approaching voices. The portière that divided the anteroom from the room beyond stirred as a draft caught the curtains. The owners of the voices had entered the next apartment, and one of them I recognized as Father Beulais.

"You did not tell me everything," he was saying, and I thought his voice was more than ordinarily solemn.

I half rose, not wishing to play the part of listener

to a private conversation; but the next speaker's voice made me sink back again.

"I want your absolution for that one thing, Father Beulais; but I will tell you everything — now, if you like, all — all!"

The tones, gentle and sweet, were those of Lady Jane Grey! My impulse was to speak, to cry out; but a faintness swept over me and kept me glued to the chair.

There was silence for a few moments. Lady Jane began to speak once more.

"I wanted to marry the American and leave the boulevards; but she took him from me!"

"She?"

"I mean the American girl, the one who was always burning candles to Our Lady at the Notre Dame. You remember her?"

The priest gave a monosyllabic assent. "You say she took him from you?" he queried.

"Yes; but they're not together any longer, and they're not married, either."

"Why?"

"Because he was angry when he found out that she had been a cocotte."

"You're mistaken! She was never that!" the priest said harshly.

If an almighty voice had ordered me to move then, I could not have done so. My brain was living and working among the events of the past. Was it Fate or God that had brought me so close to my enemy?

I thought I heard a sob; then silence followed.

"But you did not come to tell me of the American woman," the priest said presently.

"No."

"Then speak, Child, speak! If you poor souls could only understand the plan of redemption, you would not

look upon temporal things as so necessary. Death would be preferable to sin. My heart bleeds with sorrow for you all. If I could do something — if I only could!"

"The American tried to help me leave the boulevards; but he wouldn't save me the way I wanted him to."

Lady Jane spoke so bitterly that I imagined just how she looked as she spat it forth.

"Do not forget that I am a priest," was the grave answer.

"Isn't that why I came to you? And I have something to tell you,— I've left the Boulevard St. Michel as you advised."

"I'm glad." The man's voice expressed genuine pleasure.

"But that's not all," Jane went on wearily. "I must go back to a time about which I haven't told you. A man first sent me to the boulevards when I was only a little girl; for when he cast me off my people would not take me back."

I imagine the priest crossed himself; for he jingled his beads and muttered a petition to the Virgin.

"I am with Casperone Larodi!" Jane's voice came sharply through the curtains.

If I could have made my presence known just at that moment! But my limbs and throat were paralyzed.

"You do not expect me to absolve you from some action you are committing over and over again, do you?" demanded the priest. "You remember one day at the Notre Dame that I warned you against the sin of repetition?"

"So you did, Father; but you don't know what it means to have starvation staring you in the face — and I was ill when he took me with him. One can't work on the boulevards when one is ill."

She paused, and the priest offered no remark.

"I shouldn't have done it, if the American had loved

me — if it hadn't been for that pig of a countrywoman of his, that worthless *chamois* —"

"Hush!" ordered Father Beulais. "You must not speak so!"

"But he doesn't love her any more!" cried Jane. "He hates her and has sent her away!"

She spoke with such triumphal assurance that I trembled as if she had dealt me a blow between the eyes. In an instant she brought out:

"It was Captain Zadie who told me about them. She's a woman who once lived in our house. The red-headed pig nearly took my head off!"

"Where is the American woman now?" asked the priest.

"Somewhere in the Forest of Fontainebleau. She's not married to Everard. That's my one consolation. Holy Mary! How I hate her!"

"Hush, hush!" the priest reproved sternly. "Remember you are in a holy place. And the poor little American woman has suffered for her sin!"

"*Oui, oui, oui!* And I'm glad of it. Roger Everard turned her out directly after he found out about it."

"About what?" The words came harshly.

"That she had been on the boulevards."

It seemed a long time before the priest asked in a low voice, "How did he discover that fact?"

"I told him!" rasped Jane.

How exultantly she spoke! And she made a quick movement; for I heard the rustle of petticoats and the rattle of bangles.

"For shame, for shame!" Father Beulais chided her with his voice deepened with emotion. "Some day — now I speak more as a man than as a priest — you may have to call upon a woman for mercy, perhaps this same woman. God grant that she may be more tender than you!"

There was a note of prophecy in his tones, and he walked up and down the room.

"Poor little American girl!" he murmured softly.

"You needn't waste your pity on her!" sneered Jane. "She's rich, with more money than any one person could use in a lifetime."

"Perhaps," Father Beulais paused,— "perhaps that is the reason Everard is seeking her."

Jane's next words caused me to rise unsteadily.

"No, no, he doesn't care for money! He's got enough of his own. He's going to take that baby away from her when it's born."

"How do you know?" demanded the priest.

"He told Casperone Larodi. He would have married the pretty pig — Casperone, I mean —"

Father Beulais stopped her with, "Cease your gossip and go home! The man's a brute to make that girl suffer more. He can and probably will take the child; but —"

I brought to mind Bruce's warning that Roger; but just what happened next I only vaguely remember. It must have been that my feet moved without my own volition. I dragged the portières apart and stood breathless and wild-eyed before them. They turned at the rattle of the hooks on the curtain rod, and Father Beulais sprang toward me.

"Are you sure of what you have — just said?" I panted, waving him away as he tried to take my hand. "Is it possible for him to take — my baby from me?"

Lady Jane muttered a French oath; but Father Beulais did not reply to my question: instead he asked another.

"How did you get in there?"

"As I always have — by the door. But, oh, do tell —"

Jane laughed jarringly. "Mademoiselle came to listen, it seems."

"Please go back and wait a few minutes," interposed the priest, addressing me. "I shall come to you very soon."

He placed himself between Lady Jane and me; but she pushed him aside and came to me white with anger.

"It was like you, you snake, to listen! I suppose you heard about Larodi? You would have done better to have married him. He loved you — he loves you still! You couldn't make Roger happy. I could! I hate you — how I hate you! I hope that all the misery that can come to a woman will come to you through your —"

"Silence! As you hope for forgiveness in this world and the next —" commanded the priest.

He did not complete his sentence; but crossed himself. Then he touched the bell for the servant, and Lady Jane was shown out. The priest lifted the curtain for her to pass through. She halted a moment, and looked at me with an unaltering expression of hatred, until Father Beulais forced her away. I sank down, half fainting, in the nearest chair. Immediately the priest was back at my side.

"Sit up," he ordered gently. "How came you in that room?"

"The *concierge* told me that you were out, and I was waiting for you. I couldn't help coming in — you can't think what I've endured!"

"I knew you would suffer," he replied gravely. "A soul like yours can't break God's laws without anguish."

"Oh, I want to be assured that I can keep my little one — I love it so!" I lifted one of his hands and kissed it. He touched the crucifix with the other.

"A father has more moral and legal right than a mother," he said hesitatingly.

I stood on my feet indignant, ashamed. "How can a man be so wicked? And he — he is more heartless than

anyone else I ever knew. Oh, God! what shall I do?"

He made a deprecating movement with his hands. "Whatever agony you pass through only helps your soul to struggle upward. And this adversity is to perfect it through God's inscrutable providence."

I choked out my reply. "I have grown to believe, someway, somehow, that there is no avenging God: only great, universal Love!"

"And who told you such a nefarious thing?"

"Bruce Stewart," I replied truthfully. "He is the one good man I know in all the world."

"You must talk with him no more like that," said the priest. "Have you thought that it might be a good thing for you to enter some sacred place? Not here in France, — God help our poor suffering sisterhood! They won't ever have a home here again,— but say in another country. Have you ever thought that you would like to go back to America?"

I shook my head. "No," I replied. "No! I don't want anything but my baby. Nothing — nothing!"

He stood in deep thought, and, remembering another matter that had brought me to him, I said timidly:

"Father Beulais, I want to give you something for your work, to use as you think best." I drew a check from my pocketbook and handed it to him. "It will help, won't it?"

Glancing at it, he lifted his eyes upward and moved his lips in prayer.

"I'm glad if you are pleased," I said, before he could speak.

"I can't express myself," he murmured. "We have been needing money so badly for our work! I have been asking for it. This is my answer. I shall pray that God may make you as happy as you have made me!"

"Dear Father Beulais, I want nothing in return," I

said. "I owe you more than you know. At any rate, let me think that some little child or suffering woman will be benefited, and if you want more, ask me!"

A sudden radiance illuminated his face. "I still believe that Heaven intended you for a Sister of Mercy from the beginning. God alone knows why you were sent into such temptation!"

I winced, and he must have seen the pain in my eyes; for he turned and walked up and down the room.

"I am a man myself," he went on; "but I am glad that I was saved from the world of men, for I should be bowed with remorse if I had been instrumental in making any human being suffer as you have suffered. It seems that things have been ordained wrongly, and that the power of sin is stronger sometimes than God Himself."

"Don't say that!" I cried. "I came here, hoping —"

The priest wheeled about abruptly, and faced the miniature altar upon which were candles burning before the statue of Our Lady. "To think that I should have forgotten God's goodness," he groaned, "that someone should have to remind me of it! Verily, out of the mouth of babes —"

He did not finish the quotation; but stood for a long time with his head bowed before the Madonna, his lips moving in secret prayer.

CHAPTER XXXII

I'M nearly wild with anxiety and dread. Added to the news Bruce brought me, I've had a letter from Casperone, and I scarcely dared to read it to Zadie; but I simply couldn't keep it to myself. I began by asking her to sit beside me.

"Zadie," I said, "do you remember what Mr. Stewart told me?"

"About the other man?" she demanded.

"Yes. Well, this letter," I held it up, "this letter is from the man who stole his brother's baby. You remember Larodi?"

"Sure," she said interestedly.

"I'll read," I went on, "and then I want you to tell me just what to do; for I'm racked with uncertainty."

Without waiting for her to speak, I began:

DEAR PHYLLIS—

I've met and talked with Roger Everard, and we have made a plan for your future. He has utterly abandoned you; but demands his child. I love you, and would marry you, now that you have money, and because I have wanted you sorely. So, after a time, when Everard has had his way, I shall come to you with an offer of honorable marriage. I think it might help you to decide if I send you Everard's message. He said to me, "Tell her that I bid her to marry and be respectable." I shall see you soon, *ma chérie!*

Yours in lifelong devotion,
CASPERONE.

I dropped the letter and looked at Zadie. Her face was crimsoned with rage.

"What a pig! What a damn pig!" she exclaimed.

"Don't swear, Zadie darling! But — oh, what shall I do?"

"Send and get the good man!" advised Zadie.

I knew she meant Bruce.

"I can't, Zadie, I can't! He's too good for me! Oh, Deary, isn't there some way out for me? I can't and won't give up my baby, and I'd rather die than marry Casperone! What shall I do?"

"Send for the good man," Zadie said again.

I only shook my head, and there was no more said just then. For an hour afterward Zadie labored over a letter, and when I asked her to whom she was writing she said laconically:

"To *ma mère.*"

The letter had no sooner gone than she came to my side.

"I tell you a lie, Pheelis. I haf sent letter to Monsieur Bruce, and he comes like the vind to *ma petite!*"

I haven't made up my mind whether I'm angry or not. Yes, I have, too. What's the use of writing like that? I'm crazy to see Bruce Stewart, to have him comfort me. What will come out of this tangle of human emotions? I wonder?

. . . . . .

The more I think of Roger's wickedness, the more I tremble for my future. Bruce shines out of my past as the one noble influence in the world. How many times I have wished that I had known him before! Bruce, darling man! Any woman with sense would have realized what you were at the very first! I think now that I really know Roger; that I must have been in a dream all those awful days. Even then, I remember how devoted Bruce was, and can still sniff the fragrance of the roses he brought me. I'm too tired to write any more!

. . . . . .

Two weeks have gone by, and over my head has passed the most exciting, most secret, days of all my life; but under my feet the ground is securer.

I remember saying that I knew but one good man; but I had forgotten Father Beulais. He is the truest servant of the Master he worships. Although I have decided that he is wrong in his doctrine, I am sure of his sincerity.

Two days after I saw the priest, Zadie and I were sewing together. My thoughts were busy with threatening calamity. A footstep on the path made me get to my feet. Bruce Stewart appeared in the door, followed by Father Beulais. I stood unsteadily and looked from one to the other. Bruce's face was set and white, and the priest's filled with solemn sweetness.

Bruce looked from Zadie to me, and halted as he kindly asked her to leave us; but I placed my arm about her shoulders and was the first to speak.

"If you have anything to say," I faltered, "let Zadie stay: she is my friend."

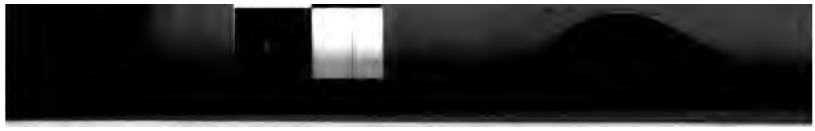
Bruce bowed his head, and Zadie placed chairs for them both. It must have been embarrassment that kept them from speaking. François' voice from the gorges brought us to our senses, and Father Beulais spoke:

"We have come to help you, your good friend and me."

"No, no one can do that!" I replied helplessly. "No one is able to do that!"

Bruce sprang forward and took my hands. "Dearest of all women, I can! I have come to marry you, Phyllis! Listen, Dear," he pleaded, as I slowly shook my head. "Listen, until I have finished! Don't think I'm the least bit self-sacrificing, as you have said. I love you so, Child, and want to take care of you! I must, I must, or it will kill me!"

Never had I heard such a warm thrill in his voice, usually so calmly measured. He was offering me so price-



less a peace that I could only weep in the agony of refusal. I resolutely closed my soul to the tenderness in his tones. Then I saw that he was thinner and quite pale. If I had only realized his heart bigness long ago! But I did not see my own happiness when it was at my very door.

"Will you do this thing for me, Phyllis? Will you let Father Beulais marry us, Dear? In spite of your decision, I've had the bans published in the village. I shall only watch over and care for you. Phyllis! For God's sake don't say no and shake your head that way — don't!"

I looked at Zadie, and she nodded emphatically. I turned away, tempted to be taken into his arms for the brief space of a minute. But how terrible that would be! I couldn't marry this man when another had been — To think of Roger makes me shiver. I wonder how I ever thought him good? But just then I made up my mind that Bruce should not be sacrificed to the tragedy that had swept me into such dishonor. Not one of the three should make me change my mind, as much as I needed to be shielded from the father of my baby!

A touch on my arm, and Father Beulais was beside me.

"Does Mademoiselle remember the conversation we had a long time ago?"

I cried in sudden fear. "Don't *you* try and persuade me, too, Father Beulais! Please don't! I won't!"

"Nevertheless, I must speak," broke in the priest. "Please do not interrupt me when I'm talking to you. This man loves you, and has told me that he has loved you from the beginning. You have made an almost fatal mistake which only a man who does love you can save you from. God in His mercy has sent him to you. If you turn from him, you will make another mistake."

He stopped, and I flashed a look at Bruce. His face was ashen, his eyes bent upon me sternly. Something — I say it in all reverence — some emotion filled me with the

most exquisite sense of rest. How different it had been with Roger! In my girlish passion I had demanded him. In Bruce's uplifted love he demanded me, simply to save me. He was rich in the spring of his twenty-five years, while I had grown old — old during a few months' experience.

"Can't you two see the wickedness of this thing?" I sighed.

Father Beulais took a long breath. "Your little child will be saved from a bad father!"

My head began to whirl, and my heart to beat until I could hear it. I don't remember just how it all came about; but when I again realized anything I was standing beside Bruce Stewart, his arm around me, and Father Beulais was saying slowly:

"Those whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder!"

No more had the solemn words pronounced me a wife than the shame of it all crushed me. The wonderful sacrifice of my husband and my acceptance of it brought me infinite pain.

"I'm sorry — I'm sorry!" I cried, covering my face. "Oh, how could I have done it? How could I have listened to you both? It was wicked — wicked! Pardon, Bruce, pardon!"

I was on my knees near the stone cross. Bruce lifted me up into his arms.

"Oh, my beloved! You are my wife," he murmured, "and may God do to me as I do to you! Listen, Love, listen! I shall care for you only when you need me, that is all!"

I remember that before Father Beulais went away I knelt at his feet while he blessed me. Zadie was quiet, save for a sob now and then. I evermore distinctly remember that Bruce took me in his arms and, tenderly

kissing my forehead, followed Father Beulais from the monastery.

After he went away, I tried to figure out how I had been capable of it. That a woman as sinful as I dared to link my wretched life with that of such a man! But — but he is my husband, my very, very own! And as I write, I weep over us all,— over Bruce with his dignity of soul, over my baby, my little unborn baby, and lastly over myself. My baby is mine by God's decree, and — and Bruce's by adoption.

Every day since I've longed for the sight of his face, although the thought of him makes me tremble. The difference between my affection for him and the oldtime — love for Roger —

I mustn't even write "love" when I speak of Roger. It was a mad, rash passion, during which I threw my young life under his feet to trample on.

. . . . . .

Today in my mail that Zadie brought from the village was a letter from little Nan. She had inclosed a ten-dollar bill to apply upon the price of her passage home, saying that they were too poor to send more at present. Poor little girl! I shall send it back with a sum for herself.

. . . . . .

CHAPTER XXXIII

PEOPLE say that Fate does not bring about coincidences in real life; but, when I think of all that has happened to me during the last months, I am convinced that almost everything that we do, or say, or meet, is a thread in the intricate web of purpose. I write this because of the manner Zadie's life and mine have become interwoven in the tangle of circumstances.

I was sewing this afternoon, when I heard two voices. One was that of Mère Durand, and mingled with her rough patois I heard a man's halting French. The next moment a shadow fell across the stone floor, and I rose to my feet. A tall, elderly man, hat in hand, stood there. As I invited him in, his upright figure bent slightly to allow him to enter the low doorway. There was something familiar in his appearance; though to my knowledge, I have never seen him before.

He hesitated in embarrassment. "Miss — Miss Fitzpatrick?" He stopped with a conscious blush.

"Yes," I said slowly.

I had not dared to pronounce my new name yet. I remember how it flew to my lips, and only with effort did I keep it back.

"I am Lord Donnithorne. I am —"

"Maxey Donnithorne's father!" I gasped.

"His grandfather, rather! I wish I were his father, poor lad!"

I expected that he had come to censure me for telling Maxey the secret of his birth, and felt instinctive hostility. I would champion Zadie to the last breath I drew!

The Englishman must have penetrated my thoughts; for he interposed:

"I can't deny that I'm sorry you told him: it has caused him such keen distress."

The little break in his voice revealed more of his anxiety on Max's account than any words could have done.

"The reason I have come to you is to discover, if possible, where — Maxey's mother is. I obtained your address from Mr. Stewart."

Then Bruce has not told the Englishman that Zadie lives with me!

"Do I understand that Maxey wants to see Zadie," I asked, "that he wants to know his mother?" and I added bitterly, "He met her once — and insulted her to her face!"

"So he told me," replied Lord Donnithorne. Losing his composure, he exclaimed, "Miss Fitzpatrick, the boy felt so terrible over her that for a time we feared he would lose his reason."

"Won't you tell me about it?" I implored. "Tell me of everything that has happened. I have heard nothing since the night I — last saw him."

"He was nearly frantic when he came to England — But possibly I had better tell you first of our own boy and his associations with Maxey's mother."

"She told me," I replied softly.

"Then you know that my son, my only son, Rupert, was only nineteen when Max was born?"

I nodded.

"And that his mother came away to France —"

"She was sent away!" I cried sharply, not willing to concede one inch of Zadie's ground. "She would never have willingly left her baby nor her husband!"

"Possibly not," answered Lord Donnithorne, bending his head. "I did not then concern myself with particu-

lars. My wife laid the specter that rose in our path without calling for my aid. She thought that she was acting for the best."

Oh, the pity of it all! How could Lady Donnithorne have imagined that she was doing right,— this beautiful woman with a beautiful home, husband, and son? Could any woman worthy of her sex have sent away a defenseless child into an unknown life?

Lord Donnithorne brought me out of my reverie by rising from his chair and pacing the floor. The heels of his boots clicked upon the stones as they slipped between the rugs.

"I have promised Max," he continued presently, "that I would do all in my power to aid his mother. I am here to keep that promise. The only thing we want to avoid, of course, is publicity."

I offered no comment. He paused in his walk and looked down into my face.

"Where is the woman?" he demanded sharply. "It seems that I cannot breathe until I've seen her! I could scarcely keep Max from coming here first."

"She is out," I said. "She won't be home before — three o'clock."

I caught a glint in his blue eyes, and stumbled over the words. My hesitation was followed by his face becoming set, almost hard; but he spoke resolutely.

"Then I must make you understand one thing that I've promised my boy. His wishes to disclose his identity to — to — what did you say her name was?"

"To his mother," I said softly.

"Ah, yes, yes! But it is very bitter to let anyone claim him after all these years. Lady Donnithorne and I acted wrongly toward this young woman. Believe me, we are suffering for it now."

He demonstrated no emotion save for the clutching of the gloved fingers, and the nervous twitch of his lips.

"I want to help her," said he presently.

"You're not going to offer her money?" I cried, in affright.

"God forbid! I'm aware that she is sensitive upon that point. Max confessed to me that he hoped at first that you had told him a falsehood, or that you were mistaken. It was your knowledge of the jade ring that convinced him. I shall never forget how he faced Lady Donnithorne! For a moment he forgot all that he owed her —" a tide of color suffused his face, and he lifted trembling fingers to wipe his brow. "She has been as tender to him as any mother could be, Miss Fitzpatrick. You know, he's a proud boy, and his young heart was hurt, sorely hurt. I didn't know he possessed so much spirit. But I'll tell you what transpired; for I think you should know, you seem so thoroughly admitted into our dark secret."

"Whatever you tell me," I replied, "I shall always regard sacredly."

"Thank you." He was silent for a moment, and little Violetta whined, and uttered a shrill cry as I did not notice her. I picked her up tenderly.

"We were expecting Maxey in answer to his telegram," Lord Donnithorne said presently. "I met him at the station with the brougham, and he asked me, as we were driving home, if the thing were true. I denied it, of course; but he insisted upon questioning Lady Donnithorne. She was taken by surprise, and confessed. When he had been told everything — God! I shall never forget his face! He was like a madman!"

"What did he say?" I asked tremblingly.

"He said some things I can't repeat — they were terrible." Lord Donnithorne's voice shook. "He told my

wife he could never forgive her; that she was a murderer and worse. He said — he said that we could have saved his mother and father, too, for him, had we desired, and that — but I need not harrow you with this. We tried to argue with him; but he was past listening to reason. Then he became ill, and my wife was so broken down that she begged me to agree to everything the boy demanded. If I hadn't come to France, he would have come for her alone."

"There is but one way to help her," I said, leaning forward.

He turned abruptly. "And that?"

"Maxey's mother can be redeemed only by living with her son."

"Oh, it can't be! Don't you realize how impossible that is with a woman of her class?"

I answered him relentlessly. "It's all the more imperative when you admit to yourself, Lord Donnithorne, that but for you and your wife Captain Zadie would not have led the life she has had to."

He moved uneasily, and studied me half doubtingly. "Captain Zadie — Captain Zadie —" he muttered. "It is scarcely the name we should use. After all, she is Maxey's mother."

"She is Captain Zadie of the Paris boulevards as well," said I. "And, while I am helping her all that I can, it will take a greater influence than mine to save her absolutely. She is proud and hates charity; but, Lord Donnithorne, she has a bigger soul than any woman you or I know. I tell this to you for your comfort. She is a better woman than I, a better woman than many who may shrink at hearing her name."

Across his proud face an expression of pain settled. "She is in — in Paris now?" he asked.

"No," I said softly, "and she never will go back if I

can prevent her. But I warn you that you and your wife, with all your family pride at your back, could not be so proud as this woman you censure, and if you say anything to offend her —"

"Rest assured I shall not do anything to hurt her feelings," he said. "I know Max too well to suppose that he would forgive me if I did. I should lose my boy — and, Miss Fitzpatrick, except for my wife, he is dearer than all the world to me!"

My vision blurred with tears. There was something sincere and simple about this great Englishman which reminded me of Maxey at his best.

"She will be here tomorrow?" he demanded.

I inclined my head.

"Then Max and I will come together — early, you understand. You will not tell her of my visit?"

"May I not prepare her?" I pleaded.

"No, you may not!"

"But is it fair to her?"

"I think so. I promised Max that he should be the first to tell her of their relation."

His tone was decisive, and I offered no further objection. With bowed head he walked to the door; but there he wheeled and came back with extended hand.

"Goodby," said he. "I cannot thank you enough for — for the sympathy and interest you have shown."

From the window I watched his tall figure until it disappeared down the white path.

. . . . . .

And now I'm sitting in the doorway writing in this book and waiting patiently for the sight of Zadie. Surely, if there is anything in mental telepathy, she will divine that I have something on my mind! If only I could take her in my arms and tell her the secret! But I have promised Lord Donnithorne!

CHAPTER XXXIV

IT is over at last! And what a day it has been! I could scarcely sleep last night, in my anxiety to warn Zadie of her coming joy. This morning I fussed about her, trying to arrange the stiff red hair into softer folds about her mottled face. I was strung up to the top-notch of excitement.

"You see, Dear," I trembled, "a little bird told me that someone might come this morning. Let's put on our prettiest dresses, Zadie."

Her brow lifted as she considered my face. "You ees feeling better, thanks to God's name!" said she. "I'll put on my green dress."

"Oh, Zadie, you look so well in your white one!"

"White? White ees not for old voman like me. I haf only the white you gif me. I'll wear the green."

I knew by the set of her jaw that she would carry out her plan. I sighed when I thought of the violent red hair in contrast with the vivid green of the voluminous dress; but, fearing that she would insist upon going out and leaving me alone with my callers, I went on soothingly:

"Put on anything you like, Darling."

I stood on tiptoe and kissed her. Zadie was used to my caresses, and often gave me one in return. I hoped she would change her mind and dress in white; but she kept to her resolution, and came forth resplendently clad in green.

"Zadie!" I expostulated. "You have too much rouge on your lips. Darling, Darling, do take a bit off!"

She went to the dressing table, picked up a mirror, and

surveyed her reflection. From her position, she turned and regarded me smilingly.

"Now, Pheelis, that red mek a pretty bow. I haf put it on *bien* today."

She added an extra touch of black to her lashes as she spoke. I said no more; for I remembered how many times I had argued this point with her and had lost my breath for my pains. For at least fifteen minutes we sat waiting in silence. Then I caught the sound of an automobile in the distance. I strove to calm my throbbing pulses, watching Maxey's mother mutely.

"He ees coming," said Zadie, "and I think I just take François for a valk. I not want to be sitting here round vhen you talk to fine folks. Eh? *Bien*, he ees here now!"

The machine came to a standstill, and I saw the shadow of a man flash across the window. Zadie thrust her head through the opening, and only her body was visible as Lord Donnithorne and Maxey stepped into the room.

I am sure my heart stopped beating for a full minute, and it was small wonder I was unable to speak. I got up faintly, and held out both hands to Max. I knew he had not seen the other woman, and, as Zadie's head was so far out, her ears had not caught the sound of their greetings.

"Phyllis!" cried Max. "My God! where is she? I can't wait to see her!" He grasped my hands. The boyish face was pale, drawn into deep lines. His illness had left unmistakable signs of suffering.

Zadie drew back slowly. With a simultaneous glance both men caught sight of the huge figure in green as it turned clumsily toward them. And as Zadie's eyes fell upon the boy Max saw and knew her instantly. I could no more have uttered a word than I could have flown. So I waited and waited, and everyone else did the same. Lord Donnithorne stood just inside the room, his high-bred face

white to his ears. Then, to relieve my anxiety, I sat down in a chair. Still my lips refused to speak; and for politeness' sake I tried to rise, but fell back inertly.

Zadie stared back at the English boy for the better part of a minute; then Maxey lifted his proud young face with the sweetest smile I have ever seen on a human being. But Zadie's expression didn't change by so much as the wink of an eye. The seamed mouth, bright scarlet with rouge, sagged at each corner stolidly, and her face was as heavy and unemotional as usual. Her dark red hair glistened with brilliantine and hung over the mottled forehead in a huge pompadour. Her face seemed to grow gray and old, and suddenly her lips twitched at the corners. She straightened up with a jerk, ran her fingers through her hair, and turned to me.

"You haf callaires, and not anyone I know. I go out with François a leetle while."

I knew the tumult going on in the dear, big heart. She hadn't the slightest idea that it had all been arranged. Max took the matters into his own hands. He still smiled at her — and I loved him for not looking the grotesque figure over. He was trying to search out the mother-soul beneath the color in the faded eyes.

"You — are — my — mother!" he said jerkily.

Like an animal at bay, Zadie turned and glanced from him to the window, thinking to escape that way. But Maxey's voice recalled her:

"You are my mother!" he said again.

This time his tone was caressing, with no doubt in it. What a darling boy he was! Zadie had not noticed Lord Donnithorne after the first hasty glance, and had forgotten me. She was cognizant only of her young son whom she intended to save from disgrace in spite of her own yearning.

"Beast!" she whispered with bated breath, shoving

aside the appealing hands held out to her. "I haf no — son, damn you!"

Her oath made Max drop his hands, and Lord Donnithorne winced.

"I vant to go out," Zadie muttered again, turning with dizzy, uncertain steps toward the door; but Max went close to her. Stretching out his hands toward her, he cried sharply, in agony:

"Mother! Mother! *Ma mère,* Beloved! I love you! I love you! You are my mother! I am sure of that! My father, Rupert Donnithorne, was your husband. Oh, don't — don't turn away from me! I want you so!"

His voice became sharp and pleading as he finished. He caressed the one word "Mother" as it fell from his lips, in a tone as soft as velvet. It reached the tender, bleeding heart of Zadie, and I saw her tremble piteously; but she motioned him away with a gesture. I could only dash the tears from my eyes, and Lord Donnithorne coughed.

"I haf no son!" Her lips framed with determined effort. "I ees cocotte from Paree! That ees where I lif, and that ees where I go! Geet 'way!"

But Maxey was not to be daunted. With the aggression of his sex, he drove her inch by inch before him until she was against the wall.

"Will you swear," he said solemnly, standing in front of her, "upon the soul of Rupert Donnithorne who is dead, that I'm not your son? If you are my mother, my father loved you, and searched in vain for you after you were gone. And — and then — he died for love of you! I say you must swear upon my father's soul that you are not my mother!"

There is only one way to express Zadie's efforts to hide her emotion. She whimpered like a hurt child worsted at play. "Oh, *mon Dieu, mon Dieu!* How I lufed him,

too!" A sob came between each hoarsely uttered word, and her eyes sought help of me. "Tell my leetle pretty boy — oh, Pheelis, for hees own sake, for hees sake — I haf no son!"

Her whole soul was weighted with tears and prayers. The cry rang out strange and loud, breaking the barriers Max had been endeavoring to tear away. Two strong young arms closed about her, and the boy tried to raise his mother's face; but she kept her red hands tightly pressed against it.

Maxey was speaking again: "You will kiss me, *ma mère*, now that I have found you!"

At that moment Max Donnithorne seemed a hero to me. I knew how madly Zadie, with her big-soul nature, desired to smother the pretty English boy with kisses, to snatch him to her starved heart and accept the love he offered; so I urged:

"Kiss him, Zadie. He is your own little English son."

I used the words she had spoken to me in those days long ago, and she straightened up quickly. A smile almost angelic radiated her usually passionless face.

"Vait! Vait!" she beseeched.

It was almost a command, a desire for a moment's time.

"Vait!" she said again, struggling to be free; and Max released her.

She shoved her red head out of the window once more, and only I saw what she was doing. I suppose I shouldn't have seen her hadn't I had the view of her profile from the position I held on the chair. A smacking sound came from her direction. Zadie was sucking the rouge from her lips, running her tongue quickly backward and forward, until, when she turned, they were without a vestige of red. Her eyes met mine in one single, soulful, flashing glance. She was ready for the benediction of a son's first kiss — for a holy caress from the little child she had

loved so devotedly during the bitter years on the Boulevard St. Michel.

My eyes are misty with new memories. I can't write just how Max soothed her; but I well remember how the big-souled Englishman did his part. I know that he shrank from the green dress, the red hair, and the woman in general. However, not the slightest look showed that he did not regard her as the finest lady in the land.

"This is my grandfather, Mother!" There was no regret in Maxey's voice, and tremblingly Zadie took the man's hand.

"We shall be very glad to have Maxey's mother with us," Lord Donnithorne said in a low, conventional tone, and I saw Max flash him such a glance of love and gratitude that, if his grandfather had never had another, he could have been satisfied for the rest of his life. Then I grew tired, so weary that Zadie exclaimed at my pallor, and she took Max out into the gorges. Lord Donnithorne followed at a distance. I shall never know just what was said; but when they had gone to the village, and Zadie was sitting by the door, she said, running her fingers through her hair:

"You theenk, Pheelis, my hair would be lufly if it was gray?"

"Yes," I replied, with happy tears. "I love gray hair."

"I would look more leke —"

"Maxey's mother," I broke in softly.

Her dear, raddled face changed from red to white; she stood up quickly. "I ees my Maxey's mother, and in heem I forget Boulevard St. Michel."

After that we were both silent. From the somber gorges came the cry of a night-bird, shrill at first, then slowly reducing to a sleepy twitter. The sound broke into Zadie's thoughts.

"Let's go to bed," she said, "and you sleep weez me in my room tonight. I beleef I see spooks, if you not."

Zadie begged this between laughing and crying. Later, when I thought she was sleeping and had slipped out to write, I heard her get out of bed and go over to the washstand.

"What are you doing, Zadie?" I asked.

"You theenk you ees the only one not sleep?" she retorted, turning a sublimely happy face toward me.

I smiled, and went on with this scribble. When she thought I wasn't watching her, Maxey's mother poured the contents of her lip rouge bottle into the wash-basin. What a heavenly sensation to be a — Mother!

. . . . . .

If I can't call myself contented, at least a spirit of thankfulness is growing in me day by day. There is much to be happy over; for I can rejoice with Zadie, now that she has come into her own, and I am proud and glad that Max has proved his worth.

. . . . . .

I have persuaded Zadie to buy some simple little house dresses. They do improve her so! Only last week I discovered her making a great rent in her green frock. Aghast, I asked her what she was doing.

"Maxey not like eet, I theenk," said she, making another vicious tear. "I ees going to cut it up. I not wear eet again."

"He didn't tell you so, Zadie?" I questioned.

"No; but vhen I say to him you like eet, he say slow he theenk he leke me best in black or gray. That ees enough for me!" The scissors made another gap in the cloth.

"Wait, Zadie, don't cut it up! Give it to Madame Durand."

"If you vish, Pheelis. I now take a needle and cotton

and sew eet up once more. I ees going to have some fine black dresses."

I knew that this was an effort on her part; yet I verily believe that she likes black now, because Maxey said he admired it!

. . . . . .

Roger Everard and Father Beulais have said that woman's first trouble came from the serpent; that he has been her worst enemy; that she has an inborn fear of him, reaching down the ages from the Garden of Eden. But I have discovered this, that serpents are more afraid of me than I am of them. I love them dearly, because of their beauty and vibrant life — because I have the firm belief that God loves them as much as He does us. Often, when I have been walking in the gorges, I have seen a snake lift its head from a little groove at the side of a boulder, and glide away, graceful and terrified, before I could approach it. Of course, there is Napoleon, my invalid; yet even he shrinks from me, and ventures out only when he is hungry, poor thing!

If Zadie weren't becoming used to my eccentricities, she'd think I had gone mad. Nothing will induce her to go near the box in which the invalid lives. But I'm glad that I brought him here, because he has satisfied me that God doesn't hate him nor me. There must be some mistake about that Biblical story — or possibly in man's interpretation of it. I won't believe that a dignified Eternal Creator could deliberately place one of His creatures in direct opposition to His children and Himself. I can remember arguing with Aunty about it, and her shocked face comes vividly before me. It was my unorthodoxy that hurt her; but I have never reasoned it out until now.

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The more I see of Max the better I like him. Zadie, he, and I celebrated their happiness by going down to Eper-

non. The "*petite mère*" didn't know we were coming; for we had resolved to give her a surprise, and drove to the homestead in a hired conveyance. Little Gabrielle, playing outside, saw us first, and the shout she sent up brought her mother quickly from the house, and Balandrot from the cowshed. Zadie embraced them all heartily, while Max stood shyly by. Then she put her arms round the English boy.

"Look at my son!" she said simply in French, and that was Maxey's introduction to his new relatives.

Gabrielle, the elder, wiped her hands on her apron in blank surprise.

"It's an English milord!" she murmured abashed; but her husband was the first to recover, and, leaning forward, kissed Maxey on both cheeks, while Zadie, between laughing and crying, smacked them alternately, including me.

Max, red in the face and a little embarrassed, behaved beautifully, English though he was to the backbone, and, picking up Gabrielle, the younger, who was endeavoring to reach up to him, he brought her small mouth on a level with his, with a boyish, "Hurry up and grow taller, little cousin!"

"Put me down, put me down!" she cried shrilly, as if remembering something, and as he released her she ran into the house.

"Granny, Granny! Get on my back, get on my back!" we heard her scream. "Aunt Zadie has come with the pretty milliner and an English cousin."

Her mother and I followed the child at a run, and entered just as little Gabrielle was endeavoring to fit the *petite mère's* two withered old legs about her waist, and draw the thin arms over her shoulders.

"Gabrielle, Gabrielle! Why, you'll hurt Granny! There, there, Mother, don't cry! You can come out; but she might drop you!"

The old dame had begun to snivel in disappointment; but she gurgled with joy when her daughter took her into her muscular arms, and carried her bodily out into the sunshine. Zadie kissed the tear-wet, wrinkled cheeks as they put the tiny creature down on a wooden bench in the little garden among the swaying hollyhocks.

"The mother mustn't cry," she soothed, sitting down beside her. "See, I've brought someone to visit you!"

"The milliner who looks like me when I was young?" croaked the aged woman.

"*Oui, oui,* and someone else!"

Max came to his mother's side and surveyed his grandmother. I wondered if he thought of Lady Donnithorne as he gazed at the wizened, little, old peasant, with her spotless cap-strings tied under her chin.

"He looks like a nice boy," said the old woman doubtfully.

"*Oui, oui,* and he's my boy just the same as I'm your girl."

Two near-sighted eyes took in Max from head to foot; then the creased lips fell back, and a sweet smile lighted the wan, yellowed face.

"Is he like little Gabrielle to me, then?" asked she.

"*Oui, oui, oui!* Like little Gabrielle. Your grandson, *ma mère.*" Zadie's voice sank to a tremulous whisper.

The old woman gazed at him with the wise, puzzled look of a young child. A sudden loneliness seized me at sight of their happiness. Perhaps Zadie divined it; for she rose abruptly and dragged me down to her knee beside the *grand'mère.*

"And you must make the little milliner a granddaughter, too," she said: "she's my other baby."

The old woman repeated "A granddaughter, too" like a parrot saying over a newly taught lesson. Then she fumbled around Zadie.

"It's the sweets she's wanting," Gabrielle explained, and Zadie said, laughing joyously:

"You must search Maxey's pockets today, *ma mère*," and jumped up to give her seat to Max.

My eyes became misty with tears. When I could see clearly again, Granny's face was close to Max's, and she was asking him for a sweet.

. . . . . .

Every day I grow more weary than the day before; so that now I can walk scarcely farther than the well. Once in awhile, when the sun shines, I go with Zadie to the double tree just for exercise.

Zadie isn't up yet. I've never seen a woman improve so under the influence of new conditions. It's almost like seeing a plant put out new shoots in the spring under a warm May sun. Happiness is a great factor in human life. She has stopped swearing; that is to say, when she begins a round oath, she bites her lips and ceases immediately.

Before Maxey went away, he tried to persuade me to leave the monastery with Zadie; but I am resolved to stay here, now that I belong to Bruce. Max writes his mother the sweetest letters, which puzzle me more and more. Who would think that he was the same arrogant, unformed boy I led through the soldiers to Boulevard St. Michel?

CHAPTER XXXV

I HAVEN'T seen Bruce since we were married. I often wonder where he is, and if he thinks of me every day. I know in my heart that he does, or he wouldn't have saved me. We agreed that no one should know that we were married — not just yet. I can't bring myself to analyze my feelings toward him. I know this much, though, and I dwell upon it hour after hour: that he is the best of all the world — the very best. And it pleases me to think that I am his forever, and that he is mine. He told me that, and I believe him.

Mère Durand came in this morning in wide-eyed consternation. She told Zadie in rattling patois that over the northern edge of the forest, about half a mile from us, a man lived in another monastery.

"It's been closed for years," she explained. "Why gentlemen and ladies leave Paris and come out here, is more than I can tell!" She looked at me, and went on, "Of course, I understand about Madame; but — oh, the sadness of a monastery! I should leave tomorrow, if I could!"

Zadie and I also wonder who could be so sorry about life that he would hide away from the world. I thought only women had to do that!

. . . . . .

Yesterday I think I saw the man who inhabits the other monastery. He was too far away to trace his features, and disappeared behind one of the gorges before I could

see but that he was tall and wore a gray suit. He isn't a monk, then.

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I don't know just how to write down these next few pages; but, harking back to other times and reading a bit now and then of the boulevard days, I have forced myself to begin.

Zadie and François were out together. I sat sewing, so absorbed in my thoughts that I did not hear a footstep upon the monastery path. But suddenly a feeling that someone was watching me dragged my gaze upward, and I saw a man standing near the cross by the open door. For a moment I was too surprised to speak. Then Casperone Larodi's repulsive face came out of the haze in my brain.

"Oh!" I cried, starting up. "How did you come here?"

"I should have come before," he said, with a little hesitancy, "but my mother was ill. You received my letter?"

I inclined my head slightly, and looked helplessly into the sunshine, wishing first for Bruce, then for Zadie. Even little François would have been welcome; but I heard him shouting gleefully by the spring.

"My life has been topsyturvy since I first saw you," Casperone burst out, losing his calm. "I can't seem to make anything out of it."

I didn't expect this, and remained silent.

"But now," he went on, "but now you must give me some hope. I care nothing about your life with Everard, nothing for his —"

"Hush!" I protested. "How dare you? How dare you?"

"I dare anything to make you mine!" he exclaimed. "You were mine before you saw him, and I will have

you!" His voice was full of passionate entreaty, his eyes flashing from under straight, black brows.

"How did you find me?" I managed to say to gain time.

"Lady Jane told me, and — then — I saw Everard."

Lady Jane, Casperone, and Roger Everard! All in league against me and my baby, plotting to ruin what little happiness I might get from the result of my misfortune! All the injustice of the tragedy hanging over me filled me with rage. I turned to Casperone.

"Both you and that man are wicked — very, very wicked. He is worse than you; for he does pretend to be decent."

"I could have been good, too," replied Casperone, "if you had given me a chance. I believe you still love him. But you can rest assured that he hates you most cordially. The only thing he insists upon — is — his —"

"Shame!" I wept. "Please, please!"

I sank down upon the cot, and Casperone came toward me.

"Phyllis, I love you, I love you! You can't still care for a man who has humiliated you before the whole world. Come to me!" he whispered in low, passionate tones. "Come to me!"

"You have humiliated me more than anyone else," I cried. "I will have you go — you can't stay another minute!" I glanced about quickly to the window, and then out of the door. "I'll scream so loud," I finished, "that the very stones will come to me, if you don't go, and go now!"

Casperone stared at me, his repression changed to fury. A horrible oath burst from his lips. "I'll not go," he muttered, "not until you have made me a promise! I'm going to take you in my arms, in spite of all the devils in hell."

His eyes blazed black menace, and for one moment he crowded me close in his awful embrace. I had but one thought, one friend. I opened my lips and screamed:

"Bruce! Bruce! Oh — God!"

And then my almost blinded eyes saw Bruce Stewart loom in the doorway. Much quicker than it takes for me to write it Casperone was dragged from me, and limply I watched Bruce change into a passionate, destroying brute.

It was a primal struggle of two men over one woman. Even now I can feel my heart clutch with the horror of it. Bruce snatched the lithe cane that the Count had dropped on the floor, and for what seemed many minutes the blows from the stick came down in rapid succession upon the Frenchman as Casperone's small, white hands beat the air with frantic appeal. Suddenly the cane split in two with a crack like a pistol-shot, the smaller piece flying through the window. The other fell from Bruce's fingers, and Larodi took advantage of it. He flew at Bruce with the agility of a cat, his eyes glinting black in his death-white face. Bruce caught him in one of his huge hands, and in a silent, awful, grim grip the two men swayed past the stone crucifix almost through the open door. Casperone thrust his slender hand upward to Bruce's throat, and he bared his teeth in a doglike growl. It was then that the most terrible part of the fight began. Of a sudden they came to a standstill for an infinitesimal part of a minute, Casperone's fingers dragging away at Bruce's collar.

I remember crying out in agony for them to cease; and I think it only incensed Bruce the more, for he lifted Larodi completely from the floor, squeezing his slender body until the man screamed at the cracking of his bones. Bruce raised his fist, and with my trembling hands pressed tightly to my cheeks I counted one — two — three swift blows as they fell upon Casperone's upturned face. His

yells broke out upon the stillness of the forest, echoing and reëchoing among the mountain gorges, and brought Zadie running from the spring. Standing in the door, her frightened eyes took in the import of the scene, and she screamed in English:

"Keel the pig, keel him, Monsieur Bruce!"

So thoroughly was Casperone done for that, when Bruce knocked him down and then ordered him to get up, he didn't make a move. My husband literally lifted the limp, pasty-faced fellow from the stone floor and threw him out of the monastery.

When I saw this, I began to scream loudly, as if some great, threatening danger had passed over. I tried to get to my feet; but in an instant Bruce was at my side. He knelt down, the anger dead in his face, his dear eyes filled with tears.

"That you should suffer this, Dearest, and at just the minute my back was turned!" he moaned. "Oh, the days I've watched over you, only to see you abused, after all!"

I wept on and on as he smoothed my face, bathing it with the water Zadie brought. When I could speak, I begged him to see that he hadn't killed Larodi.

"Oh, it was awful, awful!" I shuddered. "I've never seen anything so frightful!"

"He deserved that and much more, the cur!" replied Bruce darkly, and he went out. Presently he came back to say that Durand had picked up the Count from the walk and that Casperone was weeping in the little shop.

"He's hurt no more than he can stand, damn him!" muttered Bruce. "The miserable, dastardly coward!"

I love all of Bruce's oaths, every one! They are as much a part of him as his brilliant eyes and his broad shoulders. For a time I lay back and closed my eyes. Bruce turned and spoke to Zadie.

"This is the first day I've left her since she became my wife," said he, "and I only went into the village for a few minutes!"

I opened my eyes in startled amazement. "Where have you been, then?" I whispered.

"Always near you, Beloved," he murmured. "I've spent the day but a short distance away among the gorges, and the nights just at the edge of the forest."

"He is the man whom Mère Durand spoke of as being in the other monastery," I said, turning to Zadie. "Were you, Bruce?"

"Yes, yes, Phyllis. It was the only way I could protect you; for I feared even worse than has happened today."

I sank down again and covered my face. He had feared Roger! Suddenly over me came a dreadful fear, a premonition that I couldn't explain. I struggled to my feet.

"Bruce! Bruce!" I cried. "Take me away — oh, take me away! Oh, to be anywhere but here! I want to go with you and Zadie!"

"Thank God!" exclaimed Bruce, and straightway Zadie made ready to leave.

In the hurry of the moment I had forgotten my wounded protégé; but when he did come in my remembrance I went to the cot and lifted the white drapery from under which he crawled each day for his rations. Napoleon was coiled up in the wooden box — dead!

I have lost a friend, one that gave me proof of universal love for all God's creation! Napoleon's companionship has caused me to lose my egotism in being human, and I have held out my hands in loving fellowship to every living thing.

Bruce buried him for me.

. . . . . .

Although I haven't been able to meditate much, still I vaguely recall how Bruce and Zadie took me out of the monastery to the village. It's all like a dream, one hideous dream of bodily pain and heartsickness.

I can't tell how long it was afterward when I opened my eyes and looked about. Through the dim light I saw Father Beulais, his solemn eyes directed away from me to someone else. As the things in the room became more tangible, little by little, I was aware of the fact that Bruce was standing near him, too.

Gradually, as my sight returned, I clearly traced the outline of a babe, white and thin, stretched out on his hands. I moved my head slowly on the pillow. My hearing must have been cleared; for Bruce's deep voice broke in upon me.

"Father Beulais, I would give all my life and my soul's salvation if I were his father! My God! how can I bear this?"

The words stole through my senses as the faint song of a morning bird comes to one in the last dreams before full dawn. Then again I strained my ears to listen. Father Beulais said in French:

"My friend, you have much to be thankful for. You have the woman. She will live to bless your days, all your years. The child is weak, and may thank only you for his — name."

This startled a noise from my lips. Bruce passed my baby to Father Beulais, and sat down beside me. I had strength enough to lift my hand and pass it over his face. It was feverish, and his square jaws were lined in sorrow. Shivering, I huddled under the covers, and whimpered and cried until Bruce lifted me and ran his arm round my shoulder.

Even as I sit here and endeavor to think of something more that happened that night, I can't. The first clear

episode in my mind is that one morning I woke up to see Zadie sitting in a rocking-chair with my baby in her lap, and Bruce bending over me.

Like a flash the past came over me,— his goodness, his magnificent generosity, and, added to this, he loved me with that sacred, unselfish love with which some men do love their wives.

. . . . . .

Oh, my baby, my precious little baby! He's so beautiful, so tall, so very, very white! And sometimes, as I look into his eyes, I can read from his soul a pity for all I have borne since I first knew him. A boy, a little son, my own child! And I'm his mother, his own mother! I've never loved anybody half so well. But I'm going to write a little about Bruce.

One day, when my baby was about five weeks old, he came back to me in all friendliness. I noticed that he didn't kiss me as he had so many times before.

"Phyllis," he said slowly, "I'm going away for a time. You are safe now from any enemy you may have had. Larodi's lesson will teach the rest."

I felt a stab at my heart. "To America?" I faltered.

"Oh, no: just for a little trip to buck up a bit, you see — to pull myself together." He sent me that brilliant smile that had always awed me, and went on, "I wanted to ask you if, when I come back —"

Intuitively I knew what he was going to say, and cried, "Bruce dear, don't say it!"

The light fled from his eyes, and a tide of color swept from his throat to his brow. "I love you, Child!" he murmured brokenly.

"And I hold your dear, unselfish love as the most sacred thing in my life," I said, low toned and tender; "but, Bruce, you can understand, can't you, that the baby —"

"Yes, yes, I understand!" He paused an instant.

"It's hard!" he got out at last in a changed voice. "God! but it is hard!"

Until now Love at its purest and best had been an intangible, fleeting, substanceless thing. At this moment a wonderful thrill swept my being, and then I knew that I had fallen in love with my husband,— a real love sanctified by suffering on my part and sacrifice on his. I got up and placed my baby in his bed, and slowly walked to Bruce.

"Dearest," I murmured feebly, "please look at me!"

He swung round sharply, and I suppose the expression upon my face drew him to me.

"Bruce," I said, flushing in hesitation, "when you return to Paris, I want you to come to the baby and me! Then, then — but I can't tell you about it now, Dear!"

With a mad cry, he snatched me close, smothering my eyes, my lips and throat, with hot, passionate kisses. He suddenly released me, and when I got back my breath he had gone.

. . . . . .

As I write I am holding my baby, and oftentimes I stop my pen and look down at his little face in solemn wonder. Just now he is gazing steadily upon the light, his clear, blue eyes holding a strange expression that has been in them since his birth. I'm anxious over him at times.

Only today I arranged in my mind how I feel toward him. Of course he looks like — just now I can't write that name; but another time, if I'm less bitter, I'll fill it in. I haven't even given baby a name yet: for that he must wait. I can remember in those first few weeks, after I knew that God was going to give me a somebody all my own, I longed with all my soul for him to resemble his father. Then, afterward when things had proved so unreal and unnatural, I thought that, if it should be so, I couldn't find love enough in my heart for him. But how

changed I am! Love my baby? My little angel boy — oh, Childy, how I adore you! I live for you, and only you, and yet — I have detached you absolutely from him who is but the other part of you. In his bigoted soul he gave up his right — I mean moral right — even to look upon your baby face, and if I can prevent it he never shall!

The most indistinct part of those monastery days is my marriage to Bruce — big, wholesome Bruce. I regret it only for his sake: he is tied for life to a woman who is held by the bond of motherhood tighter than the ties of earth to Heaven. Sweet baby child! A boy of my very own, much more my own than if Roger could claim him, too! I think, when a woman becomes a mother of a son, then she's just as big as a woman ever can be, in spite — yes, I say in spite of what her life has been! Even the love of my good man cannot drag my soul near everything good as this one, small nameless boy stretched out in his baby helplessness on my knees. Once for all, I've decided that I love him better than any being in the wide world, and, when I liken this mad love for him with all the others I've known, they seem in comparison like pygmies to giants. I've even analyzed the love. It's a mixture of Heaven and earth, of God and man, of passion — mother-passion, which comes only to a mother.

I'm wondering, too, as I write of Bruce, and I sigh and wish and hope — what am I hoping for? Nothing absolutely, nothing save that my baby may grow to be a man, loving me even when he knows of me and what I have done. At this moment he's sleeping. He must have closed his eyes when I was interested in writing this. His long, dark lashes cast shadows on his face, and my last words tonight before I gather him to my arms to sleep shall be, May God, Heaven, and all His holy armies of angels bless and keep my boy — my little, living son!

CHAPTER XXXVI

I HAVEN'T thought of one thing lately but my sick baby. He doesn't seem to get any better. So many more things have happened to me — I mean real things — than have ever happened before! Bruce had been gone, if I remember rightly, about two weeks, when one morning Zadie came to me, saying that a man was awaiting me in the drawing-room. Strangers were not welcome at any time, and I sent back a message that at that moment I should have to be excused. I heard Zadie give the word, but could not catch the man's answer; but I knew he was persistent, because Zadie argued in a loud voice as to my inability to see him, and she plodded back.

"He says he must see you one minute," said she. "It is important, very, very! About your money!"

I got up hastily and went into the drawing-room. A heavy-set man in uniform, standing by the table, made a low obeisance to me. I stood still, slightly inclining my head.

He glanced at a paper he held open between his fingers. "You are Miss Fitzpatrick?" he demanded in French.

"Yes — and your business?"

"Madame, I am this day, by order of the court, serving this paper upon you!"

Even then I didn't suspect the nature of his business. He had told Zadie it was about my money. I extended my hand and mechanically took what he offered.

The man turned toward the door. "Madame may read it at her leisure," said he.

I didn't even glance at it until I was back at Zadie's side.

Then I read the paper once, twice, and three times before opening my lips. Roger had served a court order upon me to surrender to him my baby son! Not remembering that Zadie didn't know the contents of the service, I burst out:

"Zadie darling, they couldn't, could they? Oh, tell me they couldn't!"

"Vhat? Vhat ees eet?" she exclaimed, taking up the paper that had fallen to the floor. In a maze of despair I heard her lisping out the words. Her face was pale when she turned to me. "You need Monsieur Bruce," was all she said.

"Yes, yes!" I cried. "But where is he? Tell me something to do! Could Father Beulais help me? Don't you think he could?"

"I go for the priest," said Zadie, rising suddenly.

I noticed before she went out that she bent and kissed my baby, and I heard the clatter of rosary beads as she leaned over him. Zadie loved him with all her big French soul.

I shall never know how long she was gone; but her face was still more drawn with anxiety when she came home to tell me that Father Beulais would not be in Paris for some weeks. And my baby is too ill to be taken away from the city, even if I were allowed to go!

. . . . . .

To write all the details of consulting lawyers, and the minutes of uncertainty I went through, would gall me too much. There seemed not the slightest hope for me to keep my little boy from the man who had refused him his name. And Bruce has gone, too, I know not where. The lawyers have all said that the law gives a father the right to his child, marriage or no marriage. Yet, for money,

I obtained the services of one not much interested in the baby or me. He smiled disdainfully as he folded the check I gave him. I have made up my mind that when the day comes summoning me to the court I'll throw myself upon the mercy of the judge; that I'll tell him all my story, all of Roger's perfidy, of my love for my baby — Oh, they can't take him away! — for how shall I live? As I watch him from where I sit, I have the feeling that he has always been mine, that there could never have been an hour when he was not with me, and no future day can I survive without him. I've done everything to find Bruce, the only man in all the world to whom I can appeal. If I could go back to that day, that last day, when he left me with love on his lips, how I should hold him! Nothing could take him from me, and in my misery I am honest enough with myself to admit that I want him for my own sake as much as my boy needs him!

. . . . . .

Zadie came to me this morning with the baby in her arms.

"I deed this," she said, shoving the morning journal into my hand. I glanced at the marked passage in *Le Matin* and read:

If Monsieur Bruce Stewart, American, late of Paris, sees this, come to Phyllis.

I lifted my eyes and searched the dear, raddled face. She had thought of something that might save me and mine!

"I had not dreamed of doing that," I said slowly, and when the thought flashed over me that Bruce might see it I sprang up and thrust my arms round my friend. "Zadie, Zadie! God bless you, Dear! Oh, go pray,

please! Pray that he will come to me! I feel very sure I shall die!"

She was gone nearly an hour, and when she came back her eyes were swollen and red.

"I say a hundred Hail Marys and Holy Marys for Monsieur Bruce. He come, you see — you beleef he comes, Pheelis?"

Her voice twisted with pain and suffering. I stood up and kissed her.

"I believe, I believe, Zadie!" I moaned. "He'll come! My husband will come!"

"Then, if you beleef, he comes — see? God has said eet, and Zadie know he comes when Pheelis beleef."

And I do believe that he will read my need of him! What a mite of a soul I am to have my son, and my husband! Two of Heaven's choicest possessions!

. . . . . .

It is all over, and Bruce is not here!

Day after day seemed to fly. Every morning I wanted the day hours to lag, that I might hear something to keep the breath of life in me for the trial I had to bear. And every night hour I held my baby to my heart. I prayed until sleep took my thoughts away, that he might be left with me; for I needed him so!

Zadie says that men have guarded our house every day since the paper was served. I suppose they thought I would take my baby and run away. I certainly would have tried to, if he had been well enough to travel. Little boy lamb, suffering from blows he received before he was born! He hasn't had half a chance, even to live!

I had been notified that the proceedings would be private,— only those interested allowed in the court.

At last the morning came, and two men arrived to take us into the city. Never shall I forget how I felt when I took my son in my arms to follow them out.

When Zadie refused to go with me, I turned upon her sharply. Her eyes were full of tears.

"Little Pheelis," she whispered, "I steel beleef. I stay and vait — for Monsieur Bruce."

"It is too late," I replied sadly. "But stay and pray, Zadie, if you can."

I went out, frozen to my bones. How solemn was the courtroom as I walked in and took a chair indicated by my lawyer! The direct proceedings have left my mind — I mean the technicalities of them. But I remember that several men with long robes sat high above the gaping crowd of eager faces. I glanced back once, and saw Roger, his hand shading his face. I was nearer hating him then than ever before. The faith that Zadie had instilled in me was dead, and I was alone among the dark Frenchmen who would sign and seal my death-warrant. The first thing I heard was a drooning voice speaking Roger's name and mine; following this, the reading of a clause of the law that, if carried out, would surely kill me. I had rather see my baby dead before me, than have him taken into the life of a man like his father!

It's all so hazy now as I write, that I have only the memory of Roger passing down the aisle after a man had called his name. But every word he uttered is seared into my mind as if it were burning me.

I raised my eyes to his face as he took the chair, and his gaze was centered upon me. I looked steadfastly back at him. He turned his head to answer the first question.

"Your name?"

"Roger Everard."

"You are married?"

"No."

"You are the father of a child?"

"Yes, a son."

"Is that child here in this courtroom?"

"Yes."

"And the mother's name?"

"Phyllis Fitzpatrick."

"Is she present?"

"Yes."

"And your desire for the boy is — what?"

"To take it for its own good. To separate it from a mother I have proved unworthy to have charge of an innocent babe."

He spoke with such decision in low, even French, that I shivered. He turned his eyes to the judge, whose glance fell upon me, as he questioned.

"Monsieur, you — you could not be persuaded to marry this woman? She's but a girl herself, this mother of your child."

In a flashing glance at the judge's face, I read deep sympathy and interest, mingled with fatherly benevolence. Tearfully I lowered my head. My mind turned to Bruce with desperate longing, hearing but dimly Roger's forceful word, "No!"

"Then let the mother speak," said the judge slowly.

As Roger rose, a man touched me on the shoulder. I went up with my baby, and sank into the same chair. The usual questions asked of me as to name, age, and other things, I answered dazedly. It all seemed too much like an unhappy dream to be able to grasp its fatal reality. A man came forward after a whispered conversation with Roger, and spoke in an undertone to the magistrate. The judge nodded his head, cleared his throat, and turned to me.

"Is Monsieur Everard the father of this child?"

Aroused and full of terror, I shot an angry glance at Roger. His handsome face whitened, and his lips set in a straight line. If I answered in the affirmative, my little

son would be torn from me, and to deny — that I couldn't do.

I waited so long that the judge leaned forward and put the question again. Still, I could not force myself to assent. Then something happened that made the few silent listeners turn in expectation.

At the interruption the judge rose to his feet; but reseated himself, looking toward the door. I lifted my eyes, and saw Zadie sink into a chair, and — and Bruce Stewart was walking down the long aisle toward me! His dear face was ashen to his ears. The golden-brown eyes sent me a flashing glance of protection. I stood up quickly; but the man at my back touched me authoritatively and said:

"Be seated, Madame! You haven't answered his Honor's question. Is Monsieur Everard the father of this child?"

Limply I sank back, making no effort to speak. Then through my brain came Bruce's strong, reliant voice:

"The woman is my wife," he said, waving his hand toward me. "The child was born in — in wedlock!"

Through the dead silence came an ejaculation from Roger. He sprang to his feet and came toward Bruce. For fully ten seconds they stood and looked into each other's eyes, hate in Roger's and decision in Bruce's.

"He lies!" cried Roger. "I demand that he prove his words!"

"It's easy," replied Bruce simply, turning squarely to the judge. "I am handing your Honor a certificate proving that Phyllis Fitzpatrick was my wife long before the birth of this child. In the eyes of the world and the law I claim them both!"

The magistrate studied the paper with frowning brow.

Up through the window came the roar of the city's traffic, mingling together with the shouting of the river

sailors and the voices of the street-hawkers. But in the room there wasn't a sound until my marriage certificate crumpled in the judge's fingers. Then he turned to me.

"Is this man your husband?" he demanded.

He pointed his finger at Bruce.

"Yes — yes, I am his wife!" I said chokingly.

His Honor bent over and handed the paper back to Bruce. "There has been a grievous mistake, an unheard of blunder," he commented slowly. "I cannot fathom it. Madame, you have my heartfelt sympathy, and I beg you to pardon this court for an insult such as has never happened before." Facing Roger, he said, "Monsieur Everard, I have no authority to give you another man's son."

I drew a long, sobbing breath and cried, "I'm so glad, so very glad! Bruce dear, take our — our baby and me with you — take us both home!"

I can remember distinctly that one of the court men had to hold Roger; for in his rage he lost his mind for the moment. A confused sound of voices, a calm order from the judge, and my husband placed his arm round me, drew my baby to his breast — and the next thing I knew Zadie was with us in a closed cab.

. . . . . .

My baby is dead, and as Zadie is visiting Max at Oxford I am alone in this flat. Every day I long more and more for the little boy who was so suddenly taken away from me. When I ponder on my Paris life, I wonder that I am living at all; but I'm enjoying a new-found peace — or is it indifference? No, no, it is not that — not indifference toward my husband!

. . . . . .

The coming of Bruce stayed my pen last week. He asked me if I would go to Mrs. Everard. She desired to see me, and Roger had implored that I come.

We were met at their home with the statement that Mrs. Everard was worse, and that the doctor said she couldn't live many hours. Bruce and I waited until we were summoned to the sick-room. The nurse whispered in explanation as we stood in the hall with one hand on the door-knob.

"Mrs. Everard has been asking for you. She has been blind since last evening. Her son has not been able to persuade her to give him the message. She has been very uneasy about it."

"And you don't know what she wants to tell me?" I asked.

"No," answered the nurse; "but Mr. Everard says that you are to come quickly."

I followed her, with Bruce close to me, tiptoeing in, and looked over the foot of the bed. Roger was seated beside his mother. I shall never forget his face. When I came in he raised his head, but for only one brief instant.

The nurse whispered to the sick woman that I was there, and with a faint smile Mrs. Everard opened unseeing eyes which I noticed were deeply sunken. She looked years older than when I had last seen her. She tried to lift one hand; but Roger grasped it in his.

"Don't, Darling, don't! Phyllis is coming nearer."

"I am here, dear heart," I said gently, and took the cold fingers in mine.

"You have been gone long, Child," she breathed. "We could not find you."

"I'm sorry," was all I could say.

"Roger has suffered with me," she went on closing her lids, "and he told me he had been searching everywhere for you."

I looked up quickly, and caught Roger's agonized glance.

"Tell me, dear Mrs. Everard, what you want to say to me. You have been wishing to see me?"

"Yes." The wasted hand raised feebly to brush away the tears welling large in the sightless eyes. My head was close to hers.

"I am here," said I.

"Why — are — you — staying — away — from — Roger?"

Each word was punctured with a sob. I didn't answer; but bent impulsively to kiss her hand. It was stone cold with the chill of death.

"I haven't told her why you and I are not together," Roger muttered to me.

"How shall I explain my absence?" I whispered back.

Mrs. Everard opened her eyes again, questioningly. "Roger, send the nurse from the room," she said.

The attendant disappeared in answer to Roger's sign, and we three waited until Mrs. Everard spoke. With an effort she rolled her head on the pillow in her son's direction.

"Roger, I haven't told you, but I heard you say that dreadful thing to Bruce Stewart and Maxey the night you asked Phyllis to marry you."

Roger leaned over desperately, and exclaimed, "I am sorry, Beloved, I am sorry!"

"And — my — conscience — has — whipped — me — to my death — since — then!" came the weak voice from the pillow.

"Rest now, Dearest. Don't talk any more," Roger urged. "Phyllis and I are both here."

"No, I haven't finished. . . . I mean what you said — about — the — child — born — of — sin —"

Silence fell again. I could see it was a deep emotion that had kept the woman from speaking. She was not struggling with death alone.

"I have longed to die during the last few months," Mrs. Everard continued in a low tone. "I did not wish —"

Roger's face was convulsed with deep feeling, his voice sharp with entreaty. "Mother, how can you say that to me, when I've worshiped every breath you've drawn?"

With a pathetic gesture she stretched out her hands. "I know you have loved me, my darling; but you wouldn't if you knew the whole truth. Phyllis, are you there?"

The blind eyes flashed in my direction, and I smoothed her hair back reassuringly.

"Roger, I have always been a good mother to you, haven't I?"

Tears stood in Roger's eyes, and he smothered the cold hand that he held with kisses. His lips refused to frame words; but the dying woman seemed to understand, for she lifted her hand and laid it on the dark bowed head.

"Roger — listen!"

"I am listening, my darling!"

The thin lips tried to speak. An expression of horror flitted through the gray-black eyes, widening the lids. Then they closed tightly. A struggle was going on within the heaving bosom.

"God! Mother, can't you trust me?" Roger's voice rose sharply.

"I — have — committed — the unpardonable sin!"

I raised my head and uttered something — I don't remember what it was. For one trembling moment Roger started up; but the thin, blue hands of his mother clung to him so frantically that he dropped limply on his knees beside the bed.

"I — want — to — tell — all!"

Neither one of us encouraged her to proceed, and I saw Roger's tense muscles soften as he bent over to kiss the twitching mouth.

"I have been dying ever since that dreadful night I heard you say that God's face could not shine upon a little child — who —"

"Mother, Mother!"

"Hush! I must tell you!"

They had ceased to think of me.

"Your father, Roger, was a good man, wasn't he?"

"Yes, yes, very good."

I remembered that Roger had once shown me a letter written by his father just before his death, commending the precious mother to the little boy. It was a beautiful letter, full of admonitions and advice, and brimming with love.

Mrs. Everard half raised herself in bed. "I was not married to your father when — your eldest — brother was born — the little brother who died!"

The last words came out with a rush, and she laid back white and spent.

Roger sat gazing at her as if transfixed into stone.

She gathered herself together for one more effort, and her unseeing eyes were filled with a strange, mysterious fear. "I've always hoped — that — that — sin was atoned — for! But if — if — he is in — darkness —"

She turned toward me, gray faced and hopeless, and I cried:

"Poor little mother! Let Christ, not man, decide what to do with our children. No man is able, no man competent, to say — to dare to say — that the little child who is dead is not with Him!"

That seemed to give her strength. "If I have doomed my little son's soul to misery, I must have committed the unpardonable sin!"

Her words rose hysterically high, pitched to a treble so shrill that had the nurse been listening outside she must have heard.

I saw shudder after shudder run through Roger's body; but he clung like death to the withered hands. Then the voice came, still sharp with anxiety.

"I loved the child better than myself —"

She choked for breath, and for a moment I thought she was gone; but she rallied, drew one hand away from Roger, and felt for me. I could not bear the agonizing appeal, and put my lips close to her ear.

"Can you hear me?" I called.

"Yes," she breathed.

"Mother, don't turn from me!" It was Roger's cry; but she didn't heed it, but tried to search my face with her vacant eyes. I turned frantically upon Roger.

"Let me assure her. What do you know — about — a woman's love?"

"Speak then, speak, quick!" That was from Roger. With an effort I bent over the white face.

"You can hear me, Mrs. Everard?" I asked again.

The drawn lips formed a voiceless assent.

"You believe that Christ was sent by the God of love?"

Again the lips moved.

"He does not say there is any sin that will keep us away from Him in the next life. You loved Roger's father?"

"Yes, yes," she managed to bring out, "and I married him — afterward."

Roger kissed the limp hands passionately. With brimming eyes I forced my voice into the dull ears:

"I know that you will see your husband and your little child in the Holy of Holies, with the Christ you love and have served!"

I tried to make my voice carry conviction. She heard me; for the light of a great joy flashed over her. As if the blindness had been stricken from her, she raised herself in the bed, almost tearing her hands from Roger.

"I see, I see! They are here — my husband and the — little boy!"

The tones were so infinitely tender and pathetic that it must have been that ministering angels were in the room. The vision faded with her death. Her loved ones had come for her, and the weary spirit fled with them. The gray head fell forward, and Roger uttered a cry.

"Mother, speak once more! Phyllis! I — am — the chief of sinners!"

Roger's cry and his words brought my husband to my side. He slipped one arm about me and allowed the other to fall upon Roger Everard's shoulder.

"Old man," he said huskily, "stand up! Don't cry that way — don't!"

In sympathy, I too touched the bowed man, and my eyes flashed to the dead woman on the bed. It must have been the shudder that ran over me that made Bruce lead me toward the door and out.

"Let's leave him alone with her," he whispered, and when we were in the hall my husband drew me close, and I sobbed with hidden face against his breast.

Suddenly a pistol-shot rang out from the room where death had so lately entered. Bruce dropped me and rushed back. I followed close upon him.

Roger lay across the bed almost upon his mother's face. His eyes, glazed and dying, were turned toward us. He raised his limp hand to stay Bruce from lifting him, and whispered:

"Phyllis! Phyllis!"

Bruce pushed me forward, and I bent over to catch Roger's whisper.

"I'm so sorry, Child dear — so sorry! Forgive, forgive!"

For an instant I saw in the blanched, dying face an expression like my baby's. I forgot Bruce, everyone.

I knelt down and sobbed out, "I have forgiven long ago, Roger! I have, I have!"

With the last rallying of his sinking strength, Roger lifted his head. "Shield her, Stewart," he whispered, "and love her; for she is — good, with a soul as big as God's!" He raised suddenly and in one effort placed his lips to his dead mother's face. "Poor little mother!" he breathed. "Take me, too, your boy, your baby!"

Then he died, and I don't remember anything more until, when daylight came back to me, Bruce was leaning over me bathing my face.

CHAPTER XXXVII

OUT of my casket of dear memories, I take those last two hours I spent with Bruce after Roger's death.

He made no effort to persuade me to take up my life with him, and, much to the disgust of Zadie, he kissed me sadly and went away. As much as I desire and miss him, I would gather the tangled threads of my life together by myself. Bruce, in delicate understanding, realized this.

"Phyllis," he said, "my life belongs to you — call me if you need me."

"Bruce darling," I responded in tears, "may I call you when I want you? There can be no more needs."

"God speed the day!" he whispered, kissing me. "Do you love me a little?"

"Bruce," I answered brokenly, "every good impulse in me comes from you. You have been my friend, my savior. When we begin, I want to have forgotten in a measure."

"I understand, sweetheart wife. You have but to speak, and I shall come."

. . . . . .

I had intended to resume my habit of writing every day in this book; but a fortnight has elapsed since the afternoon Father Beulais sent his card in to me with the request to see me on urgent business.

I found him waiting for me in the little dining-room, and he took my hand in silence. I could see he was moved,

and hoped he would ask me something that would enable me to show my appreciation of his kindness in the past.

"Pardon my troubling you," he began. "I am going to beg you to do something that may seem strange. I shall not be surprised if you object."

"It would have to be very difficult before I refused to comply with any request of yours, Father Beulais."

His face colored slightly as he bowed acknowledgment. "It is difficult, I assure you."

"Let me decide," I entreated.

"I want you to go with me to see Lady Jane Grey."

I was struck dumb. He had asked the one thing in all the world I could not grant. To see Lady Jane would be like unearthing all that was most hateful in my past life.

"I was almost sure you would refuse," put in the priest; "but perhaps you will listen if I tell you something about her."

All that I had suffered at the hands of the woman of whom he was speaking rushed over me. I could see the beautiful face, hear again the low laugh that had escaped from her lips as she left us after she had succeeded almost in ruining my life.

Father Beulais went on without waiting for me to answer. "She is dying, and she asked for you."

Still I could not force myself to speak. My heart was rigid with painful memories.

"She says that you are her enemy, and that she can't die without your forgiveness."

"You may tell her," I replied in a low voice, "you may tell her that I do forgive her."

"I told her that," answered Father Beulais.

"Do you think it is my duty to go?" I asked in a fright.

"Yes."

Quickly I dressed to accompany him, and we drove in

silence to the familiar door of the house that for so long had been my only home.

I followed the priest upstairs, with but a hasty glance at the door of my former rooms. The aroma of stewing coffee drifted into my nostrils and told me that the brief day of the cocottes of Paris had begun. Father Beulais turned the handle of Lady Jane's door, and without a word I went in after him. There was the same odor of patchouli and cheap soaps that was characteristic of the place. My mind went back to the time I had first seen the rooms through the crack in the panel, when Roger was with Lady Jane.

The priest and I stole through the small entrance, and found her stretched out on the bed, with the pallor of death fast spreading over the beautiful face. My dread of her changed into pity at the sight. The lovely auburn hair lay in confusion over her shoulders and about the pillows, while her fingers plucked nervously at the white counterpane. At the sound of footsteps she looked toward us. Father Beulais went up to the bed and touched her hand.

"She is here," he said in a low tone.

She nodded, and her eyes asked him another question.

"I have not told her yet," he said, bending over the bed.

Saying this, he held out his free hand to me, and I advanced softly to the bedside and smiled down upon Lady Jane Grey. I have never seen eyes so changed. They were large, luminous, and beautiful. The hate had died within them, and they sought my face with inexplicable pleading.

"You wanted to see me?" I asked.

"*Oui!*" The pain racking her slender body drew her lips into a thin line.

"Lady Jane," I whispered, "tell me what you desire. I shall be glad to help you."

Again her eyes sought those of the priest, and Father Beulais went out.

"I want you to forgive me," Lady Jane whispered. "It's easy now for you. I'm going away, while you're to stay. You've heard about Larodi?"

"No," I replied, shaking my head.

"He left me not long after Father Beulais married us, and I had to come back here. He went away."

She writhed in agony at the telling, and I grasped both her hands in mine. They were so emaciated and hot that I shuddered involuntarily.

"Don't try to tell me if it hurts you."

"I must, I must!"

"Then rest awhile."

I smoothed back the long hair from a brow covered with beads of perspiration.

"*Vous êtes gentille!*" she whispered in French, only to repeat it in English, "You ees so kind!"

As her lips moved again, I leaned over and caught:

"Casperone started for America. He was in that boat that was wrecked, the *Carlyle*."

"In the steamer that was run down at sea?" I asked quickly.

"Yes, and since he left I've been waiting and waiting to hear. But it's too late now." She buried her head in the high pillow.

"But you will get better, Lady Jane. We will have the best medical advice for you. You must try and think that you are going to get well."

"*Non, non!* The doctor says I have to go. But I couldn't be content to die without seeing you, Madame."

All the pitying emotions in me were aroused for the

girl on the bed. I felt ashamed of the feelings I had harbored against her. She looked so wan and worn and helpless, that I sank down by her side.

"Lady Jane," I pleaded, "if there is anything you want me to do, you have but to tell me."

I did not look round as Father Beulais reëntered the room, nor did I note that he had someone with him. It was not until I saw a strange expression on the dying woman that I slowly followed her gaze. My husband stood beside the priest at the foot of the bed!

If I am truthful, I must admit that my breath left me, while my heart refused to beat for what seemed at least half a minute. Lady Jane held out her hand, and Bruce came opposite to where I sat and took it. He smiled at me, and I smiled back at him. It was one of those silent moments when each of us understood. I knew then that all these months I had been stilling a love that, had I dared face it, would have loomed larger than life itself.

As my husband bent over the little woman, she raised her arm and waved him back. I wondered at the time why she had done it; but the presence of death, the grave priest, and Bruce made me powerless to reason. I was recalled by hearing Bruce speak.

"Jane, you sent for me, too?"

"*Oui, oui!*"

"You are ill. I'm sorry. Father Beulais says that you want me to do something for you."

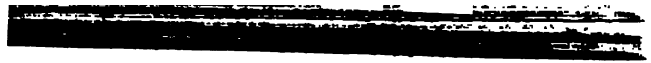
"*Oui, oui!* Will you find a home for my little girl?"

With a gesture stronger than I should have imagined possible for one in her dying state, Lady Jane swept back the coverlet, and there, almost under her arm, snuggled against her breast, lay a babe so tiny that, unless it had opened its mouth to sniff the air, I should have believed it was a wax doll.

Father Beulais, telling his rosary, bowed his head, and

"YOU ARE ILL. I'M SORRY. FATHER BELLAIS SAYS

HAVE YOU WANT ME TO DO SOMETHING FOR YOU ?"



Bruce and I stood opposite each other in silent wonderment.

"Casperone can never come back to get her," Jane murmured. "Can't you find somebody — somebody good —" her voice had become a wail —"who will take care of the little Jeannette? I don't want her to live as I have done. I should like her — to — be — good — like the women good men marry. She won't have anyone, not anyone!"

The wide eyes, shining big with anxiety, flashed from Bruce to me, and in an agony of pleading glued their gaze upon the priest.

"I don't want her to go to an orphanage," she hurried on. "The sisters are good; but they don't know how to love. I want my little Jeannette to be loved. Father Beulais says there are people who might — want her!"

Obeying an overwhelming impulse, I went hastily to Bruce's side and bent over the baby. Its wee head was covered with soft, auburn curls, and a pair of gray eyes, velvety and beautiful, peeped out upon a new world. Lady Jane's little child didn't look the least bit like my dead boy,— he was much larger and whiter,— but I thought of him as I watched the tiny fingers close and unclose. The mother hunger awoke in my heart.

"Jeanne," I cried, "will you give your little Jeannette to me?"

I shall never forget the hush that followed my question. But for Bruce's spontaneous cry, one might have imagined that the room was empty. Even Lady Jane lay like death, staring up at me from under heavy-lashed lids.

"I will give her every happiness I can, Jane," I went on. "She shall be loved as if she were my own baby. I will shield her from evil, and she shall know life only at its sweetest and cleanest. Will you give your little girl to me?"

I've heard it said that women who, at sometime in their

lives, have forgotten their womanhood, who have cut loose the strings of conventionality, can never again feel gratitude; but this is untrue, as many other things told and preached. For one brief instant, Jane sat straight up in bed. She lifted the babe in her arms and smothered the red head and rosy face with passionate kisses.

"My angel, my little one — *tu vas être heureuse — tu vas* —" Then she murmured in English, "You ees to be happy, *Mignonne!*"

She articulated the words feebly as she held the child toward me. I snatched it as her arms loosened, and both Bruce and Father Beulais lowered the woman again to the pillow. The child broke into a dismal cry as eternal silence fell upon Lady Jane Grey.

I stood mutely watching the men place the white hands under the coverlet. Father Beulais brought the burning candles to the head of the bed; then he turned to Bruce.

"Monsieur Stewart," he asked, "are you satisfied that your wife should have the child?"

When Father Beulais had put the question to him, Bruce came over and looked down at the wee babe on my breast. His face was beautiful to see, shining with love and intense interest.

"Father Beulais," he replied softly, "this little child has been given to my wife. It is hers now, and mine!"

His eyes fell upon the silent figure on the bed, and he stretched out his hand for mine. A thrill of love swept over me, and I drew closer to him.

"God help us to give the little motherless girl happiness!" Bruce finished.

Before Father Beulais could reply, my husband's arms were round me with passionate strength.

"Phyllis darling, beloved wife, are you never, never coming to me?"

My glance crossed Father Beulais. His was full of

mute insistence, Then. with abrupt vehemence, he burst out:

"It is God's will! Bless His Holy Name!"

While I was wrapped closely in Bruce's arms, the priest knelt near the dead woman. Without speaking, I softly sank to my knees at his side. Bruce followed me, and our hands met in silent prayer. In the solemn hush, broken only by the rhythmical sound of the rosary beads as the priest's fingers slipped over them, we two, my strong husband and I, began our life together.

THE END

IF you have enjoyed reading "WHEN TRAGEDY GRINS," you will be equally pleased with "Tess of the Storm Country" and "From the Valley of the Missing" by the same author. These books are now published in a popular edition at fifty cents each and represent the greatest value for the money ever offered the reading public.

Says "*The Boston Globe*" i
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